

INSIDE TALES FROM THE YAWNING PORTAL

DRAAGON+



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THE INSPIRATION ISSUE

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

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ISSUE 12

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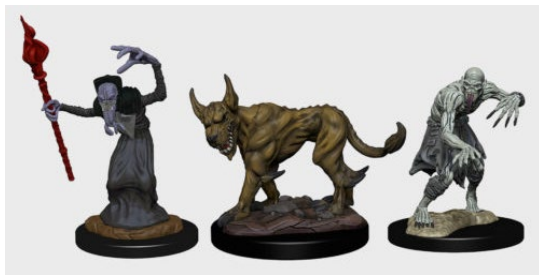
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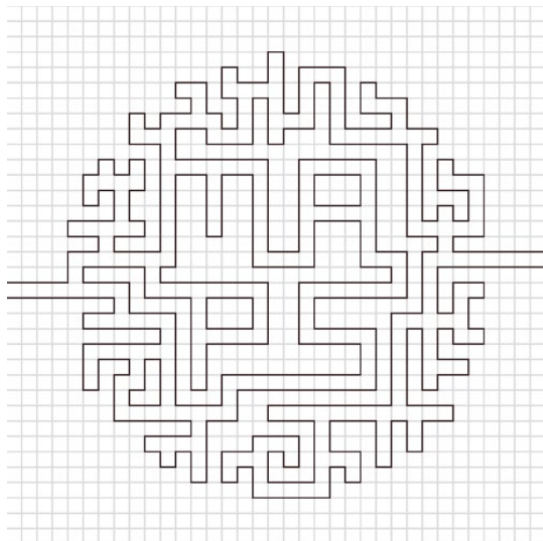
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Maps of the Month: Storm King's Thunder

For this issue, we're pleased to offer a selection of maps from Storm King's Thunder



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Mike Mearls and Jeremy Crawford conjure new options for the warlock and wizard



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Get ready to be seriously motivated, as Dragon+ presents a special inspiration issue.

DRAGON+ 12

Welcome to Issue 12

Writer/designer Adam Lee and artist Tahra welcome you to this inspiring issue of *Dragon+*

Tahra's cats are awesome. They inspire the heck out of me, and make me happy when I see them. When our senior creative art director, Shauna Narciso, first showed me the cat illustrations of artist Tahra (Kyoung Hwan Kim), my mind immediately started making stuff up about them.

When characters start coming alive in my head, and I start thinking about the world they're in, that's when I know there's something tasty afoot!

Awesome characters are what Dungeons & Dragons is all about, and it takes a very particular set of skills to illustrate characters well—something I learned from our senior art director, Richard Whitters. Needless to say, Tahra knocked these little furballs out of the park. They are cool, fun, and engaging, and I hope we get to see them adventure through an amazing world one day.

—Adam Lee



Adam Lee

Tahra의 고양이들은 멋져요. 그들은 저에게 많은 영감을 주고 볼 때마다 저를 행복하게 만들어요. 수석 크리에이티브 아트 감독인 Shauna Narciso가 제게 Tahra의 고양이들을 처음 보여준 순간부

터 전 머릿속에 이들을 토대로한 상상력을 마구 발휘할 수 있었어요.

머릿속에 캐릭터 컨셉이 확실히 떠오르고 그들이 사는 세계의 모습까지 생각나기 시작하면 뭔가 재미있는 결과물이 나올 것이라는 걸 알 수 있죠...

Dungeons & Dragons에서 가장 중요한 건 바로 멋진 캐릭터들이며, 캐릭터를 잘 나타내려면 매우 정교한 기술들이 필요합니다. 이건 제 수석 미술 감독인 Richard Whitters에게서 배운 겁니다. 두말할 필요 없이 Tahra는 이 털뭉치들로 히트를 쳤죠. 애네들은 정말 멋지고 재미있으며 흥미를 유발합니다. 언젠가 애네들이 놀라운 세상에서 모험을 하는 걸 우리 모두 볼 수 있으면 좋겠어요.

—Adam Lee

My name is Kyoung Hwan Kim, and I'm the artist behind the cover art and the character images for Adam Lee's feature in this issue of *Dragon+*. It's been with great pleasure and honor that I've been cowriting this letter with Adam, and I would like to thank all the readers for their warmest welcome.

As a character artist for games, I most passionately enjoy working on fantasy themes or sketching cats, and my "D&D Cats" work was inspired by the same happy and joyful motivations. Detailing each cat's characteristics and recreating them into game-like characters turned out to be a great joy for me. Not only was it joyful, but also challenging, in a way that meant I was able to bring out more unique characteristics than normally possible when working with human characters.

Moreover, it gives me great pleasure in knowing that such work could come alive more vividly through *Dragon+*, as though giving new life to my characters.

I'd like to take a moment to thank Shauna Narciso for allowing such an opportunity in the first place, Adam Lee for providing the breath of life required for these characters, John Houlihan for putting on great finishing touches, and all those who were involved in this project one way or another. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who read this letter.

I sincerely wish you another new and exciting adventure through these D&D cats.

Thank you.

—Tahra Kyoung Hwan Kim

저는 이번 Dragon+의 커버 아트와 모든 캐릭터 이미지를 작업하게 된 한국의 아티스트 김경환입니다. 이번에 Adam과 함께 공동 editor's letter를 쓴다는 것은 큰 영광이자 진정한 기쁨입니다. 부디 이 글을 읽는 독자 여러분들께서 따뜻하게 환영해 주신다면 정말 감사하겠습니다.

직업이 게임 캐릭터 아티스트인 만큼 평소에 판타지관련 작업이나, 또는 고양이를 그리기 좋아하는 사람으로써 저의 D&D Cats 작업은 매우 즐거운 상상들을 통해 만들어진 것 입니다. 각각의 고양이들의 특성들과 게임 캐릭터로써의 직업들이 어우러진 세계를 상상하며 만들어어나가는 것은 저에게 큰 기쁨이었으며 얻을 것이 많은 도전이었습니다. 그것은 인간 캐릭터를 그릴 때와는 또 다른 즐거움이었으며, 인간 캐릭터보다 더 캐릭터의 특징을 살릴 수 있는 작업이었습니다.

더욱이 이런 작업들이 Dragon+를 통해 더욱 더 구체적이고 생기 있게 살아날 수 있다니 이보다 더 기쁜 일은 없을 것 입니다. 이것은 저의 캐릭터에 생명을 주는 일과 같다고 생각합니다.

이런 멋진 기회를 처음으로 만들어 준 Shauna Narciso, 나의 캐릭터에 생명을 준 Adam Lee, 훌륭하게 마무리 지어준 John houlihan, 그 밖에 모든 관계자 분들에게 감사의 인사를 드립니다. 또한 이 글을 읽어주시는 모든 독자분들에게도 감사를 드립니다.

부디 D&D Cats를 통해 또 하나의 새로운 즐거운 모험이 되기를 진심으로 바랍니다. 감사합니다.

김경환 Tahra.

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Herding Tahras Cats

Inspired by this month's cover, Adam Lee presents a story guide to a new pocket dimension created and forgotten by the mysterious Cat Lord

Adam Lee

in·spi·ra·tion

noun

1. The process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative.
2. A person or thing that inspires.
3. A sudden brilliant, creative, or timely idea.
4. The drawing in of breath; inhalation.

The theme of this issue is inspiration, and since this story is about

how I've been inspired by the cats of this issue's cover artist **Kyoung Hwan Kim**—known as Tahra to those who follow his amazing work—I figured I'd start by diving into the word “inspiration” itself.

At its root, inspiration has to do with breath and creation. Because of this, the word “inspiration” is steeped in mythic power for me—the image of a god breathing life into a clay figure. If I sit with this word and go deeper into its meaning, I get this magical feeling about how we all inspire one another. The moment of inspiration is a breakthrough—a transition from a state of seeking or questioning to another state of increased awareness and aliveness. Discovery is wonderful. It's a moment of creative possibility that elevates us from having been in the doldrums or stuck in stagnation. Inspiration moves culture and society forward. By being creative and by expressing ourselves, we can breathe life into each other and help create awesome art and ideas for all to enjoy.

Inspired by Tahra's cats as an initial concept, I'm going to show you components of a sample story guide I created for these characters. This is just a labor of love inspired by the art—definitely not any sort of actual work in progress. But as a sample story guide, it's an interesting look at the kinds of creativity that go into an adventure or a setting.

For the D&D brand team, a story guide is a document we use to provide a mile-high view of a project. It gives a quick story overview, the main characters, some world notes, some in-world facts and locations, and a few ideas of how a potential project could be used in the current market and why it should be made into a thing. The story guide is primarily designed to dazzle and inspire—and specifically to inspire a reader to want to know more.

In this story guide, I use the name “Catlantis” to represent the plane that the story takes place on. But since Catlantis is already a name being used in fiction projects in the real world, consider it just a placeholder here. If this were a real game setting, I have no idea what this land would ultimately be called. Catlandoo, Catalonia, Catamaxis, Land o' Cats—who knows? Something will eventually feel right (and pass a trademark search). But for now, Catlantis it is.

Anyhow, on with the show!

Coming Up with the Story

In D&D lore—specifically first edition AD&D's *Monster Manual II*—we read about a mysterious figure known as the Cat Lord. This divine entity was recently revisited as a deity of the tabaxi in *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, and seemed like a good progenitor for the story of these anthropomorphic cats.

The story goes that the Cat Lord was creating a secret pocket dimension where he could put all the things that he loved. Concurrent with the creation of this world, he built a massive and magnificent city with his divine powers, filling it with mysteries and gold.

CAT
 FREQUENCY: Common
 NO. APPEARING: 1 or 2-12
 ARMOR CLASS: 5
 MOVE: 5'
 HIT DIE: 1
 % BLAIR: Nil
 TENDRIL TYPE: Nil
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 2
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-2/1
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Tail whip
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: None
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard
 INTELLIGENCE: Animal
 ALIGNMENT: Neutral
 SIZE: Small
 PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
 LEVEL-X.P. VALUE: Nil/1-1hp

CAT LORD
 FREQUENCY: Very rare
 NO. APPEARING: 1
 ARMOR CLASS: 11
 MOVE: 30'
 HIT DIE: 12
 % BLAIR: Nil
 TENDRIL TYPE: Nil
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-2/1-2
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard
 INTELLIGENCE: Human
 ALIGNMENT: Neutral
 SIZE: Medium
 PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
 LEVEL-X.P. VALUE: 1/2-1, 1hp

CATFISH
 FREQUENCY: Rare
 NO. APPEARING: 1
 ARMOR CLASS: 7
 MOVE: 7/10
 HIT DIE: 7
 % BLAIR: Nil
 TENDRIL TYPE: Nil
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-2
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: None
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard
 INTELLIGENCE: Animal
 ALIGNMENT: Neutral
 SIZE: Small
 PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
 LEVEL-X.P. VALUE: Nil/1-2hp

CAVE CRICKET
 FREQUENCY: Rare
 NO. APPEARING: 1
 ARMOR CLASS: 8
 MOVE: 4/6
 HIT DIE: 1-2
 % BLAIR: Nil
 TENDRIL TYPE: Nil
 NO. OF ATTACKS: Nil
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: Nil
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard
 INTELLIGENCE: Animal
 ALIGNMENT: Neutral
 SIZE: Small
 PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
 LEVEL-X.P. VALUE: 1/20-2/1hp

(Select to view)

Of course, the Cat Lord brought his favorite cat companions along as he worked. He let them run through the city as they wished, playing, catching critters, and loafing about in the sunshine as all cats do. As his cats roamed the city, the Cat Lord left to travel the planes, always returning with more items of wonder. However, since he last left the city untold centuries ago, the Cat Lord has not returned. Over all that time, the world he created was left to transform and evolve.

After the Cat Lord's departure, some of the cats in the city drifted away, choosing to explore and survive in the wild. They wandered for a time in a world filled with bizarre creatures and sites, all of

them pulled from the Cat Lord's imagination.

Eventually, those cats found a place to call home, and they lived there in caves and tree hollows for many years. But being the Cat Lord's favorite cats, they were magical in nature, and they began to transform over time into the ancient ancestors of our heroes. Over millennia, these cats became intelligent, developed language and crafts, and eventually built the great Cat Kingdom.

The earliest days of the Cat Kingdom were an adventurous and romantic age of knights and wizards, monsters and dragons. But as time passed, the need for such heroes dwindled, and though all cats remain aware of exotic cultures and monsters in the wider world, few dare to actively seek those things out. Not much is known about the world beyond the walls, the sea coast, and the close spread of villages that now mark the boundaries of the Cat Kingdom. The wilderness and coastline closest to the kingdom are well charted, but the maps showing greater distances are old and worn. Only the few adventuring cats have accurate maps, and those are fairly limited—for many of those adventurers never return.

Among the folk of the Cat Kingdom, knowledge of the Cat Lord is all but forgotten, and only wild explorers and mystic scholars now speak of this strange, mythic being and his fabled lost city. Under the current rule of King Furdinand, the cats live safe and happy lives, but they are warned against leaving the kingdom. The maxim of “curiosity killed the cat” is echoed again and again to dishearten those who get wild ideas, reinforcing the king's desire that his subjects forget the outside world. Still, every now and then, the brave explorers who make it back from that wider world bring with them mysterious artifacts, and tales that speak of bizarre and wonderful—and dangerous—things. And when they do, more and more cats become curious about what lies beyond the Cat Kingdom's walls.

This is where our story starts.

The Cats

The first thing I played around with was the cats, the stars of the show.

I sat with Tahra's images, coming up with names for each of them and fun little backgrounds to describe who they are and how they act. Next, I gave each of them a cool feature in the form of a unique item—and because this is D&D, that item was usually magical. I then gave each character a quirk, because quirks make characters more interesting and make heroes more relatable. This is important because I need to be able to connect with a character on a heart-to-heart level in order to care about them and write a good story.



(Select to view)

I also thought up a story arc for each character—covering his or her destiny, lessons, and transformation over the course of the tale. It's important to see heroes grow, evolve, and overcome the obstacles that prevent them from realizing their heroic natures.

The last thing I came up with was a voice for each character. The more I know and hear a character's voice in my head, the more I know how to write that character. Plus, later on and downstream, that sense of voice can help give a voice actor a point of reference for a project that goes on to an animation or video game studio.

From these rough ideas, I came up with the following entries for the story guide. Enjoy!

Cecil the Minstrel

Cecil is a jolly soul who loves singing and tasty treats. He’s also a fine dancer and has the gift of the gab. Cecil is such a gifted storyteller that he’s known throughout the kingdom as “The Cat of Nine Tales.” Each day of an adventure usually starts out with Cecil singing one of his “thilly thongs.”

Feature: Cecil plays a *lute of caterwauling*.

Quirk: His love of talking means that Cecil has let the cat out of the bag on more than one occasion.

Arc: Cecil’s adventures are often about making songs about the accomplishments of his traveling companions. But his destiny is to one day find himself the hero of his own tale!



Cecil (select to view)

Greeneye the Pirate

Greeneye is a rough-and-tumble pirate who fights equally well in a scrap on land or sea. Most fishing cats stick to the shoreline closest to the Cat Kingdom, but sailors such as Greeneye have a growing knowledge of the open sea—gained either by studying old documents, finding a mentor, or good old-fashioned trial and error. Greeneye hunts rat pirates for the king, and his ship, *The Mainecoon*, has taken him and his crew on adventures far and wide. Captain Greeneye has seen many interesting things on his voyages, from ghost ships to mysterious islands guarded by sea serpents.

Feature: Greeneye has a magical glaive called *Rat Chopper* that also serves as a butter knife for his morning toast.

Quirk: The captain can’t pass up a good wager, and he will even offer

odds in the middle of combat.

Arc: Greeneye's adventures take place on the high seas, but his destiny is to recognize that there is more to life than bloody revenge and golden plunder. He must find a higher purrpose.



Greeneye (select to view)

Spencer Tuffington

Spencer Tuffington is a paladin with a courageous heart and a humble faith in goodness. He embodies valor and honor, and fights always to protect the innocent.

Feature: Spencer wields the magical *sword of Saint Tabby*.

Quirk: Always formal in speech and mannerisms, Spencer never loses his cool.

Arc: Spencer's adventures take him far from his home in the Cat Kingdom. His knightly order wants him to prove himself as a knight. His destiny is to uncover his sacred quest, and to fully understand his own thread in "The Yarn" that guides the fate of all cats.



Spencer Tuffington (select to view)

Claire

Claire is a devout cleric who is a powerful healer and a wise friend. A

mentor and teacher, she has learned much through adventuring. She belongs to the Red Bonnets, a holy order of cats who study the cryptic writings of the Cat Lord.

Feature: Claire has a *staff of healing*.

Quirk: Claire does not tolerate waffle-waffle of any sort, and she is just as quick to put an end to obnoxious louts.

Arc: Claire’s adventures often involve smiting evildoers and monsters that threaten her abbey and the surrounding villages. Her destiny is to understand the ancient wisdom of the Red Bonnets and return all of Catlantis to balance.



Claire (select to view)

The Great Majikat

The Great Majikat is a mysterious wizard and a spinner of yarns. As one who sees the hidden fabric of Catlantis, she cryptically guides heroes to their destiny. She is the narrator of “The Tale,” and—as the last Majikat—is one of the oldest beings in Catlantis.

Feature: The Great Majikat possesses a magical ball of yarn that has many mystical and mysterious powers.

Quirk: Working to inspire others to act, the Majikat will not interfere directly with the world. She sometimes likes to travel in the form of an owl.

Arc: The Great Majikat’s adventures are known to no one but her, and often take place on



The Great Majikat (select to view)

planes of existence beyond Catlantis. Her destiny appears solely to be the interpreter of the mysterious and mystical weavings of fate that cats know as “The Yarn.”

Yasmeena

Yasmeena is a cat burglar who is stealthy and fast. She loves trinkets and jingly things. A master of disguise, she is known as “The Silken Shadow.”

Feature: Yasmeena possesses a feather of the Bennu bird, which has magical powers.

Quirk: The shy Yasmeena has a sister named Nadiya, whose lovely golden fur has always garnered much attention. This attention drove Yasmeena into the shadows, where she feels safe and unseen.



Yaseema (select to view)

Arc: Yasmeena’s adventures have to do with pilfering valuables, stealing secret scrolls, and using her stealthy skills to accomplish quests. Her destiny is to find the secret of the Moon Cats and join that mystical order of adventurers and thieves.

Matilda and Simon

Matilda is a Whisker Witch who is powerful, kind, and patient. Simon is learning how to cast magic and shows great promise.

Feature: Matilda has a *wand of zip*. Simon has a *wand of zap*.

Quirk: Matilda writes everything down in her *Witch’s Guidebook*. Simon is very curious and sometimes sticks his whiskers where they don’t belong.



Matilda and Simon (select to view)

Arc: Older sister and younger brother, Matilda and Simon are members of the Whisker Witches—a long-lost coven of magical cats. Their adventures are about discovering their lost past and uncovering their hidden powers. Matilda’s destiny is to reestablish the Whisker Witches and find the other lost members of the order. Simon’s destiny is to grow and discover his magical abilities, which are powerful and potentially dangerous.

Master Yao

Master Yao is a cat of action who has an unbreakable will. He’s as fast as lightning, and when he speaks, he does so with a kind of riddle-based kung-fu wisdom.

Feature: Master Yao wears the *bracers of the Nine*, which can be used only by a living disciple of the Way of Nine Lives. He is the only known master of all nine forms of Cat Fist—a mental and spiritual practice that increases understanding of the Way of Nine Lives.



Master Yao (select to view)

Quirk: Yao never sits with his back to the door and never goes out without a scarf.

Arc: Master Yao’s adventures have to do with wandering the

countryside, teaching the Way of Nine Lives, and applying a healthy dose of Cat Fist where necessary. His destiny is to find the missing lore of the Cat Lord that might be added to the Tiger Scrolls, and to fully realize the meaning of the Way of Nine Lives.

The Code of Pad Paw

Calm

One must learn to keep in one's claws.

Cool

Do not allow your fur to betray your feelings.

Collected

Be aware of your tail at all times.

Relaxed

Be like water, my fur-end.

Centered

Those who land on their feet are not always in balance.

Nap

Above all, a monk must honor the sacred nap

Pad Paw: The Way of Nine Lives

High in the Pointy Peak Mountains stands the ancient monastery of Pad Paw. It is there that the mystical Way of Nine Lives is studied by the resident monks and sages, who seek enlightenment and the ability to bring peace to the world.

Master Yao and Tub Tub are the protectors of Pad Paw Monastery. They belong to an order of warrior monks who guard the Tiger Scrolls—a series of texts exploring the secrets of the Way of Nine Lives. Some say the Tiger Scrolls were written by the Cat Lord

himself before he vanished.

Tub Tub

Tub Tub is a strong warrior who protects the ancient monastery of Pad Paw. He is Master Yao's loyal companion.

Feature: Tub Tub wields the *Ancestral Axe of the Ancients*.

Quirk: When Tub Tub speaks, he says only, "Yes, Boss."

Arc: Tub Tub's adventures are mainly to assist Master Yao, both within and outside the walls of Pad Paw Monastery. His destiny is to find out his mysterious past—he was found on the monastery's doorstep as a tiny kitten and adopted by Master Yao, who has been his mentor ever since.



Tub Tub (select to view)

The Magister

The Magister is a wizard and a scholar who is well read about the monsters and magic of Catlantis. He is the head of the Royal Academy of Cats, and despite a stuffy, fussy manner, he has an adventurous spirit and loves to dig into a good mystery.

Feature: The Magister possesses the *Staff of Confounding Questions* that answers questions and questions answers.

Quirk: Because he is so often deep in thought, the Magister routinely forgets people's names, calling those people by names that sound similar or are altogether wrong.



The Magister (select to view)

Arc: The Magister's adventures take place within the magical library at the Royal Academy of Cats, which has yet to be fully explored. His destiny will take him outside the library walls, where he will encounter the world he has always read about in books.

Clawdette

Clawdette is a strong and fearless mercenary for hire who makes weasels shake in their boots. A less-talk-more-action kind of cat, she makes her living as a bodyguard—often for fat cats who won't get their paws dirty.

Feature: Clawdette wields a *cleaver of weasel slaying*, which is set with a magical bell whose powers and purpose she yearns to discover.

Quirk: Clawdette always mumbles stuff under her breath, especially while fighting.

Arc: Clawdette's adventures are about realizing her potential as a hero—ditching the fat cats, and fighting for something she truly believes in.



Clawdette (select to view)

Tiddles

Tiddles is a loner who moves in the shadows and serves no one but himself. A master rogue whose sword is always for hire, Tiddles is often up to stuff that no one fully understands, and he's explored places that no one has ever heard of.

Feature: Tiddles wears a *cap of invisibility*.

Quirk: Tiddles doesn't like

sleeping indoors.

Arc: Tiddle's adventures are steeped in mystery, but he's often found helping explorers who take on quests that he deems worthy of assistance. His destiny is to find a place he can call home.



Tiddles (select to view)

Tabitha Twitchtail

Tabitha is a ranger and an expert archer who wanders across the land hunting monsters. She likes tracking down dangerous foes that prey upon the weak. She has little patience for masters and kings.

Feature: Tabitha hunts with a *magic bow* and *magic arrows*.

Quirk: Tabitha's tail twitches when she gets irritated, and she wiggles before pouncing.

Arc: Tabitha's adventures are mostly about hunting dangerous monsters where they trouble the villages that spread just beyond the Cat Kingdom's walls. Her destiny is to become known throughout the land as a great monster slayer and a champion of the meek.



Tabitha Twitchtail (select to view)

The Hamster Brothers

Dibbles, a fighter, is the brains. Daryl, a barbarian, is the brawn, and Nibbles, a rogue, is the boom. Being hamsters, these three brothers are intense but have short attention spans—and even shorter tempers.

Features: Dibbles has a trap or a bomb for any occasion. Nibbles has a magic *hat of great ideas*. Daryl can eat his way out of any problem.

Quirk: If the hamsters get to arguing among themselves, it quickly becomes a brotherly brawl to see who is right.



The Hamster Brothers (select to view)

Arc: The hamster brothers' adventures are usually about sneaking in, busting heads, and blowing things up. The brothers' destiny is about learning to cooperate and becoming a unified force for good.

Lord Vermin

Lord Vermin is the king of the Sea Rats, a band of pirates who raid and pillage homes and farms along the coast. Pirates such as the Sea Rats attack unwalled sections of the Cat Kingdom—fishing cat villages on the seashore or along the banks of rivers—and they dream of attacking the kingdom's main city one day.

Feature: Lord Vermin's pirate ship is known as *The Plague*. Well, it's more like a ramshackle raft with a ratty-looking pirate flag.

Quirk: Vermin is a bully while among the Sea Rats, but get him alone, and he turns into a sniveling coward.



Lord Vermin (select to view)

Arc: Lord Vermin's adventures are about perpetrating the worst kind of villainy along the coasts of Catlantis. His destiny is most likely a fitting end at the paws of Greeneye the Pirate or Lady Clawdette.

The Cat Kingdom

King Furdinand is a good but cowardly king. Yes, there are things to fear in the world outside—occasional attacks by rat pirates or by marauding gangs of weasels and stoats, or even sightings of some strange monster or beast. But the walls of the Cat Kingdom are strong and well defended, so life is mostly idyllic, and many a day is spent lounging in the sun, rolling about in the grass, or sipping tea and talking about birds and such.

Perfect for most cats.

But not for Spencer Tuffington.

This life of loafing about is not what will fulfill his dreams. Spencer is one of those curious cats who want to know what the world is like outside the walls of the Cat Kingdom. He has read too many books about dragons and monsters, and brave deeds done by noble paladins—heroes of the ancient past who were looking for a fabled city with walls made of silver and gold. A city that was created by the Cat Lord.

But in Cat Kingdom, the time of adventuring has long since passed, and knightly orders are now just tradition and spectacle. It is a time for relaxation and catnapping now, and most cats believe that only trouble can be found outside the walls.

“After all,” they say, “curiosity killed the cat.”

This favorite saying of King Furdinand is parroted with great conviction by his people. The Cat Kingdom is old, and many of its folk know the legends of trade and adventures to far-off lands. But as the kingdom has grown and become ever stronger behind its walls, it has become insulated and sedentary. Whenever Spencer begins any talk of adventuring outside the safety of those walls, his excitement is met with well-intentioned concern.

“Do you want your ears shredded by a stoat?”

“Look at old Greeneye. He lost his eye to Sea Rats and now walks with a limp.”

“What more could you want beyond these walls? Isn’t everything here enough?”

Spencer knows the tales of cats who go out beyond the walls and come back in worse shape than when they left. Stories of missing ears, paws, whiskers, and tails are whispered in darkened taverns by those who have come hobbling back to the kingdom, vowing never to leave its safety again.

But Spencer’s heart yearns to complete the quest of his ancestors—finding the Cat Lord’s lost city and bringing back the knowledge of his people’s origins to the Cat Kingdom. His desire for adventure is too great to be dissuaded by warnings.

Little does Spencer know that other cats within the kingdom have reasons of their own for thinking about leaving the safety of the walls. Some seek knowledge, while others seek redemption. These curious cats will become the friends who join Spencer on his quest to realize his knightly destiny.

The Adventure

Spencer Tuffington begins his adventure in the Cat Kingdom, where his talk of questing beyond the walls attracts the attention of other cats who share the same desire. In secret, these cats form a party of adventurers, then arrange to sneak out of the kingdom to seek their destinies.

Once outside the walls, Spencer and his companions find Catlantis to be vast, mysterious, and filled with many dangers. As they make their way through the wilderness, a number of friends both likely and unlikely join their effort and aid them on their travels—hamsters, toads, badgers, and owls. The adventurers explore dark dungeons, ancient temples, ruined castles, and lost cities, which they learn are all remnants from the time of the Cat Lord—the fabled creator of their world.

Tenets of Cat Chivalry

Keep one’s fur flat and unruffled in a scuffle.

▪
Never hiss or spit.

▪
Only the uncouth and uncivilized fight with tooth and claw. Fisticuffs will do.

▪
Licking one's fur in public is frowned upon. Bathe behind curtains.

▪
When in court, keep one's fur brushed lest one shed on others.

▪
One's word is one's bond. Meow.

▪
Don't get one's whiskers in a twist.

In time, the characters begin to attract the attention of the villains of Catlantis. These include the Mad Cats, a group of wizards led by the evil mage Fenwick. The Mad Cats seek to break the spell of the Cat Lord—a spell that Fenwick believes will turn him into a wondrous creature called a “human”.

The adventurers also run afoul of Professor Whiskerweird, a “scientist” whose bustling lab is in a haunted house upon a hill. With his assistant Noofus, the professor works incessantly in search of the means to break the foolish Way of Nine Lives, convinced that he can have ten lives . . . no, wait . . . eleven . . . no, twelve!

Each challenge unlocks a bit more of the puzzle for the adventurers, revealing hints of the origin of the Cat Lord and the creation of Catlantis. All paths lead the heroes to the Great Sphinx who is the keeper of the Cat Lord's lost city. By solving the riddle of the sphinx, they are able to enter that city and seek the revelation of the greatest mystery—the secrets of the Cat Lord.

The Noble Purrpose

Within the Cat Kingdom, a few brave souls are willing to throw caution to the wind in order to discover the secrets that lie beyond the walls.

Spencer Tuffington

Spencer Tuffington has read all the old, dusty books about the great orders of knights that defended the cats before the walls of the Cat Kingdom were built. Those knights were the ones who defeated terrible monsters and bands of brigands. But the books also told of a knight's sacred quest, and a mission of great importance and mystery that would turn a warrior into a paladin—seeking the secret location of the city of the Cat Lord. More than anything, this mission is what Spencer desires.

Matilda and Simon

Matilda is training her younger brother Simon in the magic of the Whisker Witches, a lost order of magicians whose knowledge is all but forgotten. Without their parents to help them preserve their heritage, Matilda must somehow complete both her and her brother's training on her own. Following the few precious clues contained in the remnants of her mother's spellbook, she must seek out the fabled Lost Hearth somewhere within the Forbidden Woods, far outside the walls of the kingdom. Only then will Matilda know if she and Simon are the last of their kind.

Claire

Claire is a cleric of the Red Bonnets, a holy order of cats who study the cryptic writings of the Cat Lord. In one of her order's ancient books, she has learned about a legendary creature known as the Great Sphinx, which is said to be the eons-old guardian of the Cat Lord's lost city. Her desire to learn more about this fabled keeper of the Cat Lord's wisdom has Claire dreaming of adventures outside the Cat Kingdom. The abbot of her order forbids such dangerous flights of fancy, but Claire is no longer content to just wonder whether the legends of the Great Sphinx are really true.

Tabitha Twitchtail

Tabitha Twitchtail is a ranger of growing renown. She has taken it upon herself to protect those who live on the edges of the Cat

Kingdom—or outside the kingdom altogether. Monsters trying to take advantage of weaker creatures often find themselves at the end of a volley of Tabitha's arrows, but she has always wondered as to where such creatures come from. She has no fear of the outside—only curiosity as to what is really there.

Tiddles

Tiddles is a rogue who has wandered outside the walls of the Cat Kingdom and into the wilds of Catlantis. In his travels, he has encountered dangerous denizens and exotic folk, and he has learned that there is more to the world than just rolling in sweet nip and catnapping in sunbeams. His curiosity has led him to the walls of ruined cities and the cobwebbed entrances of dungeons, but the Majikat has told him that the answers he seeks cannot be found alone. Tiddles must learn to trust others in order to complete his destiny.

Creatures

- Generally meek NPCs include mice, shrews, rabbits, moles, voles, sparrows, and fish.
- Generally passive NPCs include opossums, gophers, marmots, toads, bats, porcupines, and cats.
- Generally mischievous NPCs include foxes, ravens, jays, mockingbirds, raccoons, and cats of a highly independent nature.
- Generally villainous NPCs include outlaw cats, rats, weasels, ferrets, and badgers.
- Generally transcendental NPCs include owls, tortoises, sea turtles, eagles, old toads, and carp.
- Bugs are typically nonsentient, but exceptional specimens exist.
- Certain spiders, frogs, fish, moths, or flies might offer temporary bonuses or magical effects when they are consumed—something like potions.
- Giant scorpions of various species (yellow, red, and black) abound in the world. Some could have two or three tails, and stinger effects ranging from paralysis to necrotic poison.
- Giant spiders of various species are common—wolf spiders, lazy lobs, and bird spiders.
- Crabs of various species can be found along coasts and rivers—fiddler crabs, rock crabs, and ghost crabs.
- Octopus could be sentient.

- Giant squid are non sentient, and probably monsters.
- Sharks are presented in the manner of old nautical map illustrations, and probably monsters.

Monsters

- Dragons of varying types; catlike dragons would be cool
- Sea serpents
- Cat beholders
- Manticores
- Sphinxes
- Dragon turtles
- Devil cats, rats, and ferrets
- Demon dogs—rabid and multiheaded
- Mimics that resemble cardboard boxes (irresistible to cats)
- Most other D&D monsters work here, but let's keep away from monsters with culture, such as goblins, orcs, hobgoblins, githyanki, and mind flayers.

Nomenclature

- Cats refer to other cats as “purrrsons.”
- A heavy rain shower is characterized by the phrase: “It’s raining dogs today.”
- The language of spellcasting is called “quirky mot”. When cats cast spells, they use pig Latin (“Ireballfay!”) or spoonerisms (“Denser’s Toating Flisk”).
- Cat pirates often refer to the ocean as the “Terrible Bath.”
- Any word with “cat” in it isn’t bad in the world of the cats. A catastrophe is a wonderful event. “The Great Catastrophe” is how Catlantis came into being. A “cataclysm” is a really awesome party or a rousing gathering of cats.

Miscellaneous

- When it rains, cats generally stay inside or pack an umbrella. When it rains, the rats go to work.
- Cats employ spells to milk cows and shear sheep. Otherwise, doing so is a daunting task.
- Some animals in this world are anthropomorphized; some animals

are not.

- There are no conventional dogs in this world, for they were banished long, long ago by the Cat Lord. The demonic Hounds of Hell are legendary.
- Cat fishers catch huge fish, of the same proportion as a large salmon or tuna to a real-world cat. While fishing, it's always good to take along a *stick of gull whacking* to deal with pesky gulls.
- "Quick, scatter the nip!" Most cats find it impossible to resist the siren's call of fresh nip.

Cat Skills

- Hodgepodgery
- Kerfufflery-kerflufflery
- Tomfoolery
- Stitchwitchery
- Hobnobbing

Cat Spells and Items

- *Hypnotic Gaze*: Causes sustained paralysis for subject and host. Provides a chance for other party members to attack.
- *Dancing Lights*: Distraction spell.
- *Incessant Grooming*: Causes a cat to lick its fur.
- *Empty Box*: Irresistible!
- *Dog Ear*: Causes a cat's ears to continually crease and fold backward. Irritating!
- *Chitter Chatter*: Cat chatter that confuses prey and makes it easier to catch.

A Never-Ending Sandbox

DMs shaping a campaign in Catlantis have a wide range of options to draw from, including an expansive world, a story whose elements provide structure, and enough mystery to allow for creative exploration. Any number of stories can be told, from heroic tales that span years, to smaller one-off adventures that can take place in any number of interesting locations. DMs can use the existing cast of characters, or they can create their own using cats, weasels, badgers, toads, and otters to be the heroes of their campaign's story.

Variety is the Spice

Locations within Catlantis each have their own unique adventures, flavors, and themes waiting to be explored. Some possibilities include:

- Japanese: Draw on the rich lore of spirit foxes, ghost lanterns, and samurai. Then add in a pinch of some Miyazaki-esque strangeness for good measure.
- Norse: Viking cats who sail in longboats and worship stormy cat gods. It's all about catching fish, feasting, fighting, and fisticuffs.
- Chinese: It's the heroes of Red Cliff reimagined as cats. Cat kung fu, Shaolin temples, honoring the ancestors, and snap kicking evil.
- Egyptian: It's all about sleek and mystical wizard cats, who sail on reed boats along an endless river and build puzzling tombs laden with traps and gold. Their magic is unrivaled, and their desert world is filled with dangerous monsters.

Biomes

Each biome has its unique characters, animals, and cat types. For example, the desert biome could be modeled after the American Southwest, featuring rattlesnakes, roadrunners, armadillos, bobcats, and Gila monsters. Or it could be the Sahara, with camels, sidewinders, gazelles, and fennec foxes, or Arabia with hyenas, caracals, scarab beetles, and cobras.

Each location would feature different characters and culture, but all would involve some variation of the common myth of the Cat Lord. This creates an amazing variety of adventures, heroes, and villains, providing a unique space for DMs to play in and make their own games.

Summing Up

Hopefully, this little experiment gives you an idea of the world of Catlantis, the story, and the characters—as well as what kinds of tales might be told within that world.

When I was thinking about this world, I liked the idea of the stories being parables—little tales with a moral in each of them. That struck me as the gold of this concept, because I saw the potential for parents

to interact with their kids through these stories, using them as aids for talking about things like bravery, honesty, kindness, and friendship. Catlantis isn't just for kids, though. I love the idea of the stories being enjoyed by players of any age, and I feel like Tahra's art is sophisticated enough to do that. Our world is a reflection of the stories we tell ourselves, and since D&D is a storytelling medium, I'm always looking for ways to use its power to give something positive back to the people who interact with the game.

My job in D&D as a part of the IP development team is to be open-minded, looking not just at what the game has been and what it is today, but at what it might become for the future. I'm always looking for new ideas and thinking about how those ideas might work across different media platforms—but with the understanding that the core of D&D is a sacred thing and will always remain as it is.

Seeing Tahra's cats immediately suggested all kinds of boundary-pushing possibilities. Together, we created a charismatic adventuring party of awesome characters with a desire to explore their world and find their purpose within it. As they do so, they'll encounter monsters, find treasure, survive dungeons, and face evil wizards. After many adventures, they'll end up at the paws of the Great Sphinx who guards the Cat Lord's city. If they can appease the sphinx, the answers to all their questions might be revealed.

If that isn't a fun D&D adventure, I don't know what is.

Thanks to everyone on the D&D team who contributed ideas and enthusiasm to this project.

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Imagining the Ampersand

Meet South Korean artist Tahra—the illustrator who drew the mysterious feline magician on this month’s cover

Kyoung hwan kim is a South Korean illustrator who began life as a simple fantasy art fan. Then a big break in a design competition set him on the road to becoming a video game concept artist. His work—produced under the “nom d’art” of Tahra—blends the depth and subtlety of traditional paint and color work with the innovation and imagination of video game character design. *Dragon+* talked to him about his art, and how it explores the space where eastern anime meets traditional western forms—a harmonious marriage of styles exemplified by the Great Majikat, the enigmatic feline wizard adorning the cover of this issue.

What’s your background? How did you discover your talent for

drawing and painting?

Tahra: I've liked drawing for as long as I can remember, ever since my childhood, but I didn't imagine I would ever have a job which related to art, where I could use those skills. When I was young, I did think becoming an illustrator or cartoonist of some kind would be very cool, though. After I won my first award for a character design in a competition hosted by a game company, I decided to become a concept artist, and the rest has followed on from there.



The Fish (select to view)

How did you first encounter Dungeons & Dragons? What kind of games do you play?

My first encounter with Dungeons & Dragons was an article in a

gaming magazine that introduced me to D&D Tactics, the tactical roleplaying game on the PlayStation Portable. It was an official publication that showed players' real-time conversations in the game, and it fascinated me. It was something very new and very inspiring. I really wanted to try this version of roleplaying, but I had a hard time finding anyone around me to play it with. After that, I played the Dungeons & Dragons games made by Capcom, which had a unique and interesting roleplaying system compared to other conventional action games. I had an enormous amount of fun and really enjoyed the experience.

What led you to start creating fantasy art?

Japanese-style RPG games were more of a thing in Korea than western RPG games were, so many of the biggest and most popular fantasy-themed games of Japan influenced me. Games like Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest are really big in Korea, and these helped me define my style.

Can you talk us through the process of creating the cover for this issue of *Dragon+*?

For the cover art, I initially had an image of a wizard cat that I was already working on. Wizards of the Coast senior creative art director Shauna Narciso loved the image—and like me, I think, is a big fan of cats. And so after we looked through my portfolio and discussed things further, we settled on the idea of a cat wizard and that became the character we wanted to use in the cover image. To further emphasize the Dungeons & Dragons connection, I added the dragon ampersand image to the figure's head.

Who are your biggest influences and favorite artists? Whose work do you most admire?

I really liked the work of Yoshitaka Amano, who worked on many important early anime series like *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* [better known through adaptation as *Battle of the Planets* and *G-Force: Guardians of Space* in the west]. But I also like video game artists like Kinu Nishimura, who has worked on many of Capcom's biggest titles, and Akihiko Yoshida, who was very important for the Final Fantasy series. These were just some of the many Japanese artists I was influenced by. Of western artists, I really like the “cheesecake” style of Adam Hughes, and I also admire the work of Harry Beckhoff. I really like the fine details of a drawing or painting,

and so I tend to find I am inspired by artists who are noted for their delicate line work.



Follow the Kiwi (select to view)

How would you describe your own art style? What kinds of techniques and materials do you use?

I usually work with Corel Painter and use Photoshop for the smaller and more intricate details. I'm used to using traditional tools, and Painter is excellent for bringing out those features you find in more traditional work. I paint in a way that emphasizes my line work, and then add color to make it seem more three-dimensional, and to create more depth and reality.

Cats seem to feature prominently in your work. What fascinates you about felines?

These are only my personal thoughts and opinions, of course, but I think cats display a much wider spectrum of gesture and feeling compared to other animals. They often show unexpected behaviors, and they don't follow orders as compared to more conventional pets like dogs—or even seem to care much about what humans think! It gives off a vibe that these creatures are very independent and have unique minds all their own. That gives individual cats a strong sense of character, which provides strong inspiration for my artwork. I think you can tell I love cats. They're awesome!



Forest the Eating Soul (select to view)

What other Dungeons & Dragons characters or creatures would you like to paint or explore?

I would love the challenge of exploring and illustrating more of Dungeons & Dragons' many interesting monsters and creatures. The beholder would be a fascinating subject with its many eyes and tentacles. Or perhaps some of the chromatic or metallic dragons? Given how much I like cats, the tabaxi might be a suitable subject.

There are so many!

What would be your dream art project if you had unlimited time and resources?

I'm not sure I have a single dream project as such, as I believe what matters is that I draw and paint what I really want to, not so much how big- or small-scale a project is. To earn a living by drawing only what you want would require great experience and extraordinary conditions, and it would not be easy. But I'm really happy doing what I do. I love the many and varied challenges of being a concept artist.

What does the future hold for you? What's your next big project? Where can people learn more about your work?

I am currently a lead artist in a newly launching video game project, and that's my foremost goal for the moment. If you'd like to learn more about my work, you can find fresh examples of my artwork on my [Facebook artist page](#) or on my personal page on [Artstation](#).

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DELVE INTO *D&D* HISTORY



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Tales on Inspiration

Creating communities, transcending boundaries, and unleashing creativity—three gamers share stories of the influence and inspiration Dungeons & Dragons has had on their lives

All of us at Wizards of the Coast felt a huge amount of pride when Dungeons & Dragons entered the National Toy Hall of Fame. In **our official announcement**, we stated that as the stewards of D&D, we would continue to make great entertainment to inspire your creativity.

We're always thrilled and grateful to hear stories of how the game has helped inspire others. So for our inspiration issue, we wanted to highlight just a few of the many stories that have come our way—from Rob Gruber, game store owner; Matt James, game designer and decorated army veteran; and Kat Kruger, YA author.

Rob Gruber

Rob Gruber and his brother trademarked the name “Good Times Games” years before they ever opened a game store. They simply knew they had always wanted to do so, and took steps to make it happen well in advance. It also helped that their father— instrumental in both of them learning to play D&D as kids— owned a building in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, where he offered the brothers the space to get their start. Very quickly, a gaming club formed, then expanded to over forty regular members— and soon enough, the Grubers’ imagined game store became a reality.



For Rob, being introduced to Dungeons & Dragons in his youth marked an important turning point. “It all happened the summer of 1981. I was a typical eleven-year-old kid, had a couple of friends and a handful of enemies—or that’s how I looked at things. It was a different world. We had the run of the town and the freedom to get into a little trouble now and then. It was that summer that my best friend’s mom hired a high school kid to host Dungeons & Dragons for us three days a week. My parents were on board with this program, and we all had to commit to being there for the duration of the summer break.”

Originally, Rob thought this program was simply a means to trick him into summer school or deprive him of escapades he’d otherwise planned. At first, he resisted, going only reluctantly to that first session. But as Rob says, “My life was changed right then. Everything I do through my store, all the sports playing and coaching, all the community events—everything, I like to think, is because of that day.”

Rob and his friends played all summer long, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. But as the summer came to an end, so too did their adventures with DM Clint, and panic started to set in. “What’s going to happen to our characters?” became the players’ major concern.

“My dad seized the initiative at the end of that summer,” Rob says. “He told me he liked the positive changes in all of us—possibly the first time any of us had been caught reading a book by our parents—and wanted to empower us to continue. He told the group that if we figured out who would take on the task of becoming DM, he would provide the materials we would need to play, as well as a spot in our basement to host our adventures.

My friends and I talked about it. And in the end, I took the position as DM and have been doing it for the thirty-five years since that summer.”

Matt James

For Matt James, Dungeons & Dragons has been a formative part of his life from as far back as he can remember. “My older brother Brian always seemed to bring home books, novels, and game pieces, and I was the snotty-nosed annoying little kid who would mess them all up. I have plenty of memories of combing through D&D books, maps, and accessories. It was like my own personal Candlekeep library, with enough art to keep a young mind active.”



When he first started playing, Matt began as a simple fighter when someone in his brother’s group couldn’t make it to a game. At the time, he didn’t have any concept of what THAC0 was. “But I sure loved rolling the dice, and hearing descriptions of what I was doing!”

Matt continued his hobby into adulthood—including his experiences in the military. Shortly after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, he enlisted, first serving as a tactical communications specialist and paratrooper at Fort Bragg, NC, and later deploying to Iraq. While serving, Matt brought along his own small library of roleplaying books. As he notes

(and as many fellow gamers in the military can also attest), roleplaying gaming is widespread throughout the armed forces. Once word got around, Matt found no difficulty in finding players and setting up games when his other duties didn't interfere.

According to Matt, the only differences between gaming at home and those game sessions in Iraq were the dusty conditions and the need to deal with incoming mortar fire from time to time. "The gaming culture in the military, to me, was just like anywhere else. One might think there would be a focus on combat, or aggressive adventures. But honestly, I had just as much interest in political intrigue and exploration. Roleplaying, I feel, transcends a lot of cultural boundaries, and that's one of the reasons I love participating as much as possible."

Kat Kruger

Kat Kruger came to D&D later in life—not as a kid growing up with the game, but at Hal-Con 2014, where she attended as a young adult author. She had always wanted to play but had no idea how to start—and so D&D program manager Chris Tulach set up a tutorial for her and a few other interested players the very next day.



"D&D is such an ingrained part of pop and geek culture," Kat says. "I've seen it on so many of my fave shows, including *Community*. Experiencing the game for the first time was really eye-opening in terms of the storytelling component, and the way people played off each other to move the story ahead."

Kat had so much fun with that tutorial that she decided to run *The Lost Mine of Phandelver* adventure from the *D&D Starter Set*. Almost immediately, she found that prepping for each session made her realize how variable the outcomes could be. "I have a degree and background in public relations—which, in the words of one of my former professors, means 'professional worrier,' because we're

trained to think about what-if scenarios and have a plan in place. If I prepared for every game variable possible, D&D would be my full-time job. In a way, the game has helped me become a lot more relaxed about outcomes. Players will burn the mansion down. You just have to roll with it.”

Her experience with D&D has even changed some of Kat’s approach to her writing, especially in terms of world building. With her most recent project, she’s adopting a different tactic than with her previous books. Her current book has a steampunk alt-history component, for which she first thought to create a world bible. Instead, she’s now creating an RPG for her world, with character sheets for her protagonists.

“I’ve always been a fan of choose-your-own-adventure books, and I used to write and code my own text adventure games as a kid. But as an adult, I found myself writing very linear stories. D&D has pushed me back into that sphere of more interactive storytelling again.”

Rob Gruber

One of Rob’s first experiences with the community side of gaming came about when he was approached by a local pastor with an interesting request. The pastor had been a D&D fan in his youth, and wanted to see if it were possible to promote the positive benefits of the game in a way that was acceptable to even the most religious parents. Thus came about Good Times Games’ “Out of Egypt” campaign—a special four-week event for a Baptist church youth group.

In order for all thirty kids to play at the same time, Rob divided them into groups representing the tribes of Israelites escaping Egypt. The characters all represented leaders within the tribes, and would work together to make decisions as a group. Planning each game session with the pastor, Rob integrated lessons on generosity, forgiveness, and devotion into the game—and included bonuses for kids who remembered the scriptures they worked on at youth group that week. To maintain the young players’ interest, the storyline was kept exciting as well, featuring epic clashes with pharaoh and his enforcers, giant sand scorpions in the great deserts, and even a

monstrous summoned serpent.

Unsure of how the players' parents would react, Rob invited them to sit in and observe. "The pastor mentioned to me at the end that he was seeing kids come to youth group who rarely did, and a renewed excitement for the program because of the addition of the D&D element. It was an incredible success, and I was thanked by many parents who had previously been very skeptical of the concept. I will never forget how worried I was about trying to pull this off and have everyone happy, as well as how proud I was when I did it."

Matt James

As Matt thinks back to roleplaying while on active duty, he summarizes by saying: "It was a great way to escape, and I knew I could bring others in on my journeys." As new players joined his group from time to time, many were apprehensive at first, not quite understanding D&D. But over time, they were inevitably drawn in by the combination of roleplaying and the game's more fantastic elements.

"As with anywhere else, we had players who enjoyed different aspects of the game, whether slaying dragons, thwarting assassination attempts, rescuing gold (yes, rescuing gold is a thing!), or exploring a lost city. There was enough inspiration to come up with some truly enjoyable plot lines. Think 'Tomb Raider meets Indiana Jones.' I even drafted up one interesting dungeon delve that mimicked the history of the region we were in—Al Anbar province, just west of Baghdad.

"Like most of my experiences in the military, I found that cultural, racial, and situational circumstances melted away as everyone enjoyed each other's contributions to the shared-story experience."

Rob Gruber

A typical week at Good Times Games now sees five weekend D&D sessions, two weekly adult sessions, and anywhere from one to three D&D birthday parties. Summers also mean D&D fantasy camps (looking back to Rob's own initial experiences with the game), with

available spots quickly filled and overflowing onto a wait list. The store has even started hosting games specifically for the parents of younger players to better understand just what it is their kids are playing. “If you can get a player at the table,” Rob says, “you’ll have a gamer. And if you can make the parents see the value in the game, you win.”

For younger players, D&D typically revolves around the store’s ongoing “Heroes of Hawethorne” campaign. Of those games, Rob says, “We don’t dumb anything down, and we encourage the older kids to help and be patient with the younger ones. In some cases, we’ll have seventeen-year-old boys deferring to an eight-year-old girl because her character is more powerful and experienced in the game.”

Rob cites a number of keys to the success of this campaign:

- **A Place to Call Home.** “My story plays out of the village of Hawethorne in Greyhawk, located on the border of the Principality of Ulek and the evil empire of the Pomarj. Hawethorne and two nearby villages (Stoneybrooke and Buxton) are the first line of defense against the campaign antagonists in Pomarj. And as such, they’ve opened their gates to heroes from all over, giving inexpensive land and holdings to these characters for the purpose of having a powerful force available in case of attack. “The location is great for staging adventures anywhere, in that it has a natural enemy nearby, access to forest, hills, and mountains, as well as a coastline to the south. With players attached to the location, they get to know the people who live there, they become friends with NPCs, and they earn a reputation with the powerful figures in the area—Prince Olinstaad, the high priest of Pelor, and the master of the Merchants Guild to name just a few. Strengthening the players’ familiarity to the region gives them loyalty to it, and makes them proud to fight for it.” *(As an aside, two of the NPCs in the Heroes of Hawethorne campaign are Salimar and Sunny, a druid and his friendly owlbear companion. Because good NPCs are always of high value to a campaign, Rob has provided **character sheets** for DMs interested in adding Salimar or Sunny to their games.)*
- **Slow Advancement.** “Kids can better relate to low-level threats and situations. Plus, slow advancement allows a player who has been with me for four years to still be in a session with a player

who just joined us two weeks ago. Our pacing is slower than what is typical, and ensures that the players' actual experiences account for the experience gained by their characters. It allows for strong personality development and an attachment to the characters and their friends by the kids. "We celebrate level-ups. They become big deals instead of routine. The kids are proud of their levels, and those whose characters are lower level strive to earn the respect of those who have been there a long time before them. The more I consider it, the more vital I feel this is to our program."

- **Always the Heroes.** "This is also very important for winning over the parents. Kids fall in love with D&D easily—in fact, I've only ever had one young player decide that D&D 'isn't for me' in all my years. And having the kids always play as the heroes, as the good guys, is a fundamental step in earning the favor and trust of their parents. "We reward heroic actions, and there are strong consequences for straying from that path. Teamwork is also key to success each week. Lone wolves and those with agendas contrary to the group will find things more difficult for them, as we want to encourage teamwork and positive actions. The world needs more heroes in it, so I'm doing my best to develop some!"

Kat Kruger

Because Kat came to the game as an adult already well established in her career, "D&D was mostly a fun outlet with the added benefit of changing some of my creative processes." But in addition to using the game in her own writing, Kat also implemented D&D as a teaching tool with at-risk kids. While in Nova Scotia, she worked with the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning—a training center for youth who weren't thriving in traditional classroom settings, and so were at risk of dropping out of school.

"These are kids who don't necessarily have a lot of access to resources or experiences outside their own communities," Kat says. "Ultimately, my goal has been to get as much input from the kids as possible in order to teach creative writing through D&D. With character building, the D&D character sheets are a wonderful tool to help think about backstory and motivations. It's also important for the kids to realize that not everything they write is going to make it into the end story."

“In terms of world building, I like to take real-world environments and let the kids turn them into settings for the game. Bringing elements of their own world into the fantasy world was one way of engaging with them. At the end of the workshop, we play with a modified version of a preset D&D adventure that includes some of the elements they worked on in previous sessions.”

The kids Kat worked with came from various backgrounds, but one thing remained consistent for her. “One common takeaway that I see time and again is the confidence that the game instills in them. Even the most introverted kids, or the ones with social anxiety, are able to participate. The game is about collaboration and playing characters who may or may not share the kids’ own personality traits. It’s about exploration, not just in the fantasy setting—but I think for the kids, it’s about exploring possibilities. They’re capable of defeating hordes of goblins together, and even if that outcome is make-believe, the confidence it gives them is very real.”

It should be noted that after Kat moved to the West Coast, her kids from the MacPhee Centre decided to run their own weekly campaign (much like Rob and his friends at the end of their first D&D summer) using the D&D Starter Set. And Chris Tulach, that helpful DM who first introduced Kat to the game at Hal-Con? The two of them are now engaged.

Matt James

Matt was wounded during combat operations in Iraq in 2005, earning the Bronze Star Medal in the process. “After I was released from duty, I made a concerted effort to use RPGs and gaming overall as a means to help returning veterans and give them an outlet for creativity,” he says. “I know it’s certainly helped me.

“We have all been attracted to D&D for one reason or another, but I think the most potent reason is because it lets us do the fantastical things we dream of, or wish we could accomplish. I’ve played beside disfigured service members wounded by instruments of war, including those who have lost arms and legs. I’m telling you right now, there’s something therapeutic about donning a +2 *keen prosthetic* and taking it to the orc tribes of Faerûn!”

Since leaving the military, Matt has gone on to become an award-winning game designer, and currently works as a freelancer in the game industry. When asked about access to gaming materials for service members, Matt mentioned that with the rise of Internet companies such as eBay and Amazon, obtaining materials was never a significant problem for him while serving. “Besides, with the right Dungeon Master skills, one only really needs an open mind and a sense of adventure!” That said, all major military posts have a Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) facility. “Contacting their staff and seeing what options are available for donating materials, or hosting a game, is a great way to contribute to the military RPG community.”

Rob Gruber

Thinking back to his first summer, playing through *Keep on the Borderlands*, Rob says: “I was a blank slate. I often wondered why my friend’s mom took those cutting-edge steps to create something positive for us that summer. I like to think that she saw untapped imagination in us, and wanted to focus that in a constructive manner rather than watching us run wild and unchecked with it. A lot of my positive qualities are because of me learning to play D&D that summer.”

As an adult and a parent now, Rob says it isn’t hard to see the positive impact that D&D can have on other kids as well. “D&D develops a lot of confidence and team building in the kids. People are always impressed by how mature, intelligent, and confident the kids in our store are, and D&D has a lot to do with those developments.

“The social benefit is possibly one of the strongest aspects. In our Heroes of Hawethorne program, we now have over two hundred and fifty boys and girls between the ages of five and eighteen playing together, making new friends—and in many of these cases, making best friends and incredibly strong friendships with kids outside their regular social circles. We have dancers, hockey players, band students, swimmers, and gamers all enjoying the game together, making connections I know will last into high school and adult life.”

In no small part thanks to Good Times Games, D&D has become a regular part of life for so many kids in Prince Rupert, a city of only

12,500. One of Rob's gaming groups now includes both his nineteen-year-old son and seventy-six-year-old father as players. And they've been able to pull off huge community D&D events, where even the local mayor and other important individuals have taken part.

"D&D is part of the daily discussion at nearly all the local schools here. No day goes by where we don't have someone coming to the store to discuss D&D, asking how their kids can join, or just talking about adventures and all the fun we're having."

How does Good Times Games help make it all happen? Rob says he thinks back to his ten-year-old self, and simply asks what would he love. "I figure those things out and just make it happen for the kids here today. For me personally, it was the freedom. The fact that instead of just watching heroes doing great, exciting things, I got to be the hero. My decisions and actions led to those things. I still remember the stories and adventures from that summer. I like to think that summer, I became a hero.

"I might have found D&D at a later point in my life if I hadn't that summer. Who knows? But it's a better story when I tell people that was the summer that changed my life and helped make me who I am today!"

About the contributors

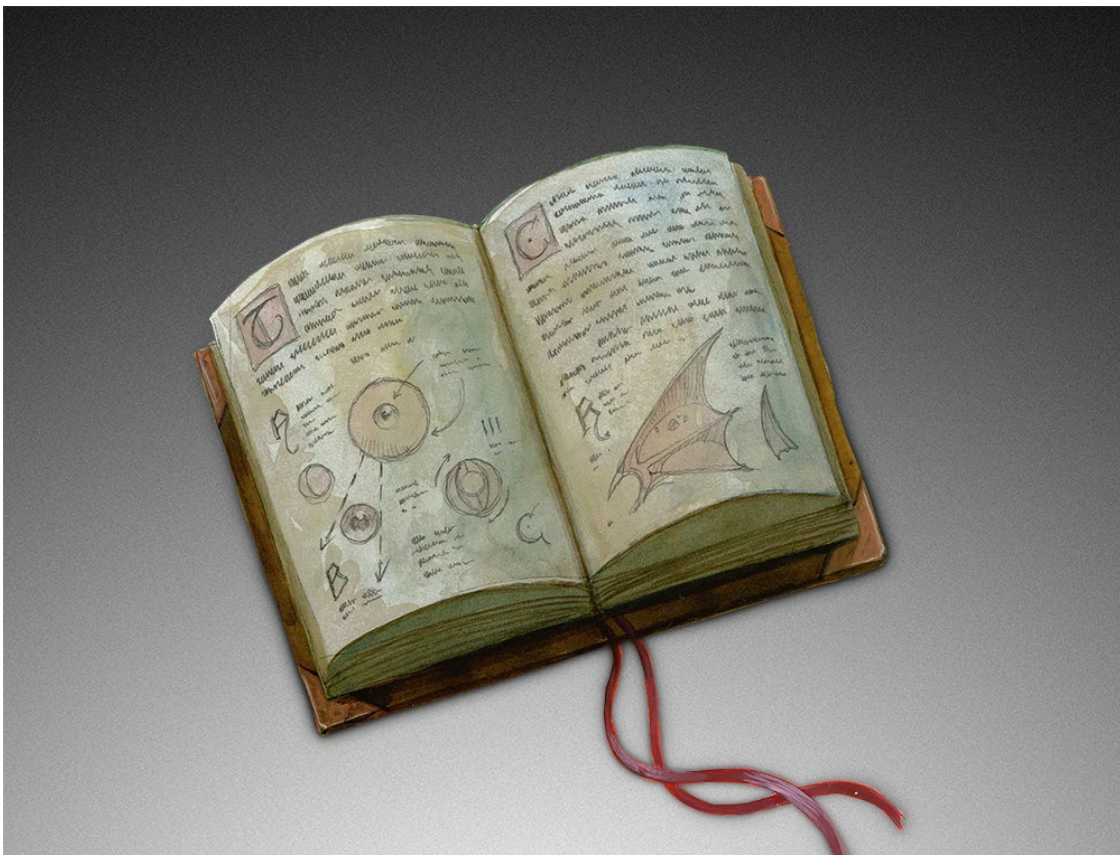
Rob Gruber is one of the owner/operators of *Good Times Games and Electronics* in Prince Rupert, BC, Canada. He is the driving force behind the wave of success Dungeons & Dragons has experienced in his community, and has been a DM for over thirty years. Rob loves nothing more than to share his love for D&D with the kids and players in his community, never turning down the chance to appear at a function as his alter ego "Saro the Elf King" in full costume, or setting up massive weekends of D&D with sponsors and plenty of prizes and freebies for players young and old. He thinks he has the most diverse player base, with his youngest players being five and his oldest players being seventy-six. You can find out more about the Heroes of Hawethorne on their *Facebook group* .

Matt James is an American game designer and a decorated veteran of the United States Army. As a designer, James is best known for his

online and print works for the Dungeons & Dragons fantasy roleplaying game published by Wizards of the Coast, the Pathfinder roleplaying game by Paizo, and for Privateer Press. He has also designed game content for Wolfgang Baur's Kobold Press (formerly Open Design LLC). In 2012, James won an ENnie Award for *Monster Vault: Threats to the Nentir Vale*, and he has been nominated for several Origins Awards. In 2014, James won an ENnie Award for the Pathfinder RPG's *Bestiary 4*. He can be found on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) .

Kat Kruger is chief wordsmith at [Steampunk Unicorn Studio](#), specializing in writing for the entertainment and media industries. She is also the young adult author of the *Lycan Code* series (formerly *The Magdeburg Trilogy*). As part of her freelance work, she teaches creative writing through gamified learning, and she holds a degree in public relations from Mount Saint Vincent University. She can be found at [KatKruger.com](#) .

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Use This Book Tonight

In preparation for *Tales from the Yawning Portal*, Mike Shea offers up DM tips on squeezing the most value out of published adventures

Mike Shea

When *Tales from the Yawning Portal* appears in April, it'll mark a big departure from the larger hardback campaign adventures we've seen previously from Wizards of the Coast. Unlike the connected narratives of *Storm King's Thunder* or *Princes of the Apocalypse*, *Tales from the Yawning Portal* focuses on seven classic dungeon-themed adventures originally released across forty years of D&D history—*Against the Giants*, *Dead in Thay*, *The Forge of Fury*, *The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan*, *The Sunless Citadel*, *Tomb of Horrors*, and *White Plume Mountain*.

Whether we play in a published world or our own homebrew milieu, this book promises DMs a toolbox of dungeons we can drop into our campaigns in whatever ways they might bring the most fun to our games. However, getting the most fun out of any published adventure means first finding the best ways to connect the adventure to the needs of you and your group. In this article, we're going to look at some time-honored techniques for doing just that.



Our License to Kill

There's a nearly universal truth among adventure designers and publishers when it comes to their works. They *want* us to customize published adventures. Unlike with video games, D&D grants us unlimited flexibility and offers almost no resistance to letting our imaginations take over as we run our games however we want to. Adventure writers know this and embrace it. They won't be vexed if you throw out that chapter you didn't like, or replace their carefully crafted NPC with one of your own. They expect it. They hope for it.

When it comes to the enjoyment of DMs and the players in our groups, we have both the authority and the responsibility to take the material we find in published adventures and make the most of it at our own table.



Grab Onto What Resonates

The process of deciding what material works well and what material should be killed will vary greatly from DM to DM. It's up to you to decide what you think works well for your own campaign, and to figure out what you want to skip. Maybe your group loves delving deep into huge complicated dungeon complexes—or maybe your players prefer five rooms connected by a single hallway.

Maybe you love running dungeons packed with interesting NPCs the players can meet and interact with in ways other than at the tip of a sword. Maybe you prefer running the true killer dungeon. If you're the former type of DM, then giving the characters the chance to charm and cajole their way through *Against the Giants* might be for you. If you're the latter, you can pull out *Tomb of Horrors*—a dungeon so terribly deadly that it's showcased in one of the best science fiction books of the past twenty years, *Ready Player One*.

As DMs, when we're deciding what to run, our own feelings toward an adventure—or even toward a single aspect of the adventure—matter. If we don't like the material, if it doesn't grab us, we're not likely to enjoy running it. As a result, our players aren't likely to enjoy playing it. But when you see something like the Doomvault of *Dead in Thay* and realize it would make a perfect base for Rath

Modar—the wizard villain of the *Tyranny of Dragons* storyline—to store his secret phylactery, you’ll find your mind spiraling beautifully out of control with ideas. That’s one to keep.



Four Ways to Squeeze the Most Value out of Published Adventures

So now we have our license to kill and we know to trust our own excitement as a gauge of what to run and what to leave behind. How do we actually get the most out of these published adventures? Let’s look at a few options.

1. The MacGuffin Envelope

In many campaigns, our heroes travel great distances in search of things. Sometimes it’s a key to an old vault. Sometimes it’s a magical artifact the characters are trying to keep out of the hands of a great evil. Sometimes it’s an old book containing a valuable piece of lore. Film director Alfred Hitchcock referred to such physical prop devices as “MacGuffins”—physical objects that focus a story and drive it forward.

As with any site-based adventure, one easy way to introduce any of the dungeons of *Tales from the Yawning Portal* into your game is by making it the envelope for the MacGuffin.

For example, say we're running *Storm King's Thunder*. In our game, the oracle of the Eye of the All-Father requires the gemstone of the crown of the Ostorian giant king before it will reveal the truth behind the shattering of the ordning. The gem was lost for thousands of years until a young wizard found it and used it for his magical studies. That wizard disappeared and supposedly left the gem deep within one of his vaults, now known as the Tomb of Horrors.

A MacGuffin might simply be an item meant for the characters to find or retrieve. Or it might be a powerful weapon or magic item that the adventurers need to defeat their foes. The characters might learn that in order to do battle with the demon lords lurking in the Underdark, they must acquire *Wave*, *Whelm*, and *Blackrazor*—three legendary weapons lost in the volcanic lair of the wizard Keraptis in *White Plume Mountain*.

2. Tying the Characters' Backgrounds to the Dungeon

If you know you're going to want to run a particular dungeon ahead of character creation, you can offer up background hooks to help the players tie their characters to the adventure. For example, the following six background hooks can be used by a DM planning to make use of *The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan*:

- A family or childhood friend went off to explore the ancient ruins of Tamoachan and never came back.
- The character has regular nightmares of a person sacrificed atop a pyramid to an uncaring setting sun.
- Your granduncle, an explorer in his younger days, left you an old map of a ruin-infested swamp—and a plea to cleanse the evil found there.
- A murderer you have hunted for years was last seen fleeing into a swamp said to contain ancient ruins.
- Your mentor has given you the lifelong task of recovering the lost history of the ancient city of Tamoachan.
- You have been given the sacred duty of finding and destroying Xipe, the Lord of Flayed Skins—an immortal tyrant said to reside in the ruins of Tamoachan.

Such backgrounds can also work as examples for players to customize, letting them make use of their own character ideas while

creating deep hooks that can bring them into the heart of the adventure you choose.

3. Right Place, Right Time

In order to make our worlds feel alive, DMs need to provide more than a single track for the characters to follow. So instead of being tied to a MacGuffin such as the location of a powerful item, or connected to a character's background, an adventure site might simply fall into the path of the characters. Not every location needs to be of primary importance, and not every character needs to have a missing sibling to bring them into a place like the Sunless Citadel. Sometimes we climb mountains or dive headlong into sunken fortresses simply because they're there. If your players are the freewheeling sort who love to explore places simply for the sake of exploring them, you need do nothing other than mention that there's an interesting location nearby.

4. Same House, New Owners

As discussed, we don't need to run any of these adventures as written. Even if we don't like the central story of an adventure, we can still love and use the location. Say we take a site like the glacial rift in *Against the Giants*—and then remove the frost giants. We can easily replace them with an adult white dragon named Stormwraith, who has filled the lair of the once-mighty giants with his own yeti and barbarian followers.

This approach takes a bit more work, since we're stripping off a layer of an existing location and adding on another layer. If the adventure in question happens to mention specific monsters in its read-aloud text, we'll have to rework this text on the fly. But otherwise, we can just drop our own monsters, stories, and hooks straight into the rooms and chambers of any existing dungeon.

Here are four hooks that DMs can drop into a campaign just about anywhere:

1. A caravan master describes a strange tomb seen from a distance in the desert of Anauroch, and which has since given him nightmares.
2. A band of brigands recently fled into the mountains near an

abandoned dwarven fortress. A 100 gp reward has been offered to anyone who brings back information of their whereabouts.

3. Three powerful magic weapons have gone missing, and are said to be within the volcanic lair of a long-dead wizard named Keraptis.
4. As they travel through the hills on their way from one city to another, the characters see a huge wooden fortress—clearly built for creatures much larger than typical humanoids.

Worlds All Our Own

As Dungeon Masters, we love this hobby because of the freedom it offers to build fantastic and wondrous worlds. Even when we're playing in published settings such as the Forgotten Realms and running published adventures like *Tales from the Yawning Portal*, we always have the freedom to fill our game sessions with our own dreams and ideas. Whatever we find in the books we bring to our tables, the adventures we run are always our own. As a DM, always embrace both the responsibility and the freedom to use every book at your disposal to fill your games with awe.

About the Author

Mike Shea is a writer, designer, and technologist who writes for the website *Sly Flourish* and is the author of *The Lazy Dungeon Master* and *Sly Flourish's Fantastic Locations*. Mike lives with his gamer wife Michelle and their dog Jebu in Northern Virginia.

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Standing On The Shoulders of Giants

Designer Andrew Parks talks about the creation of new board game behemoth *Assault of the Giants*

Since the release of *Storm King's Thunder*, giants have been dominating the hearts, minds and tabletops of D&D fans, with players consumed by the need to engage—and inevitably battle—this most titanic of foes. But what if you had a chance to see things from the giants' lofty perspective? How would you fare if you stepped into your enemies' enormous shoes, striving to achieve their unique goals, rule the kingdoms of the small folk, or dominate the recently shattered ordning?

This classic dramatic reversal is the premise behind WizKids' *Assault of the Giants*, the new board game from acclaimed designer Andrew

Parks. *Dragon+* caught up with the Quixotic Games lead designer—previously responsible for both *Ideology: The War of Ideas* and *Camelot Legends*—to learn more about the making of a game that promises to be gigantic in every sense.

What was the inspiration behind *Assault of the Giants*?

Andrew Parks: Giants have always been my favorite part of D&D, and their quirky personalities, petty desires, and special powers have always appealed to me. I've been a Dungeon Master for thirty years, and my players have learned to play dwarves and gnomes frequently because they know giants will somehow invariably make it into the storyline! When WizKids asked me to create a board game based on the latest D&D storyline, I jumped at the opportunity, and I immediately decided that this story should be told from the giants' perspective. Instead of just fighting giants, the players would become the giants and embrace all their strange vagaries and peculiar ambitions.

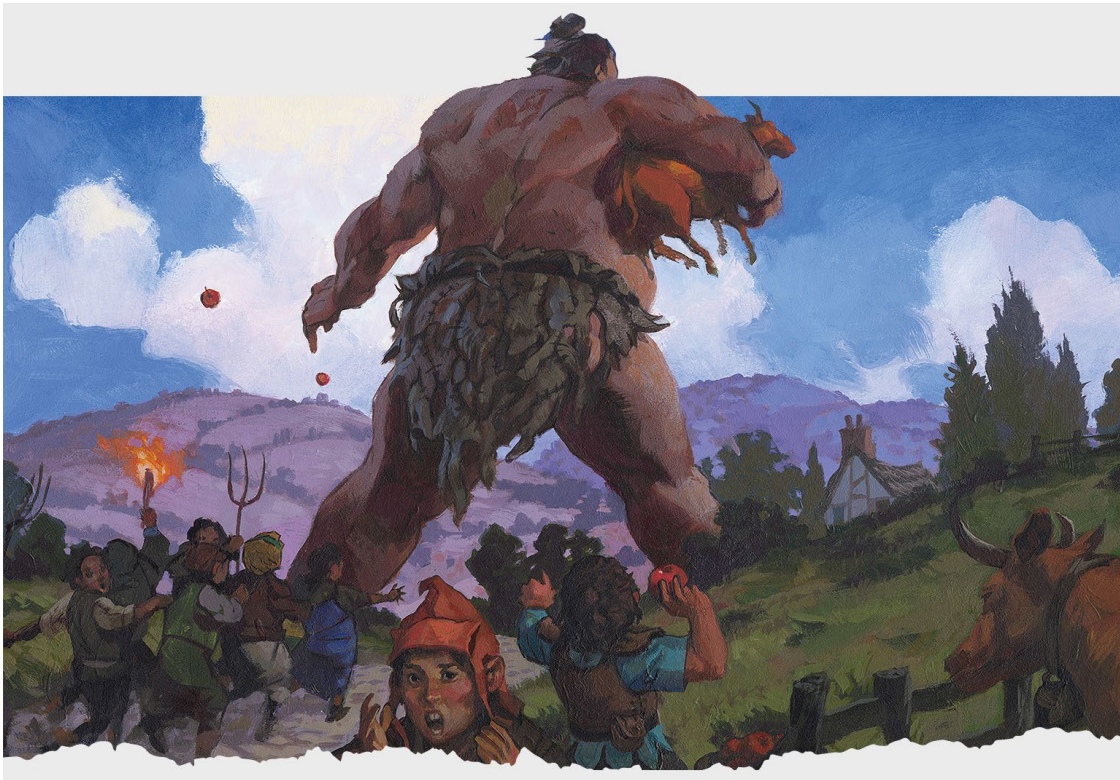
How does *Assault of the Giants* fit into the overall *Storm King's Thunder* storyline?

In the board game, we look at *Storm King's Thunder* from the giants' perspective. Each race has a different agenda, as well as a different outlook on what defines greatness. We draw on this concept to come up with individual goals for each race to pursue as they seek to gain dominance in the ordning—the giant hierarchy that's been shattered by the gods.

“Giants have always been my favorite part of D&D, and their quirky personalities, petty desires, and special powers have always appealed to me.”

How will the mechanics of the game actually work?

One of the things we really like to avoid in games is downtime. In a three-to-six player game, it was important for us to make sure that no one had to wait overly long for their next turn. Instead of having individual phases to follow, each player plays only one Command Card during their turn. These Commands include recruiting, plundering, moving, attacking, and so on.



When you play your first Command Card, you place it face up, then place your second to the right, and continue to build a horizontal row of cards. Most of the Command Cards give you a bonus based on the number you've played in the row previously. For example, when you play the Recruit Command, you get extra Recruit Points if you've first played several other Command Cards to the left of it. When you feel you need to repeat a previously played Command Card, then you play the Rest Command, which allows you to draw all of your Command Cards back into your hand again.

[The map, cards, and markers look intriguing. How do those components come into play?](#)

The map shows the Starting Region for each of the giant races, as well as the Small Folk Regions that the giants invade and plunder throughout the game. There are Resource Cards that the giants can collect and use to enhance their forces. We also added Spell Cards later in the design process, because they allow familiar spells from D&D to be translated into the board game and add a more authentic flavor.

We also introduced Story Markers to help distinguish each giant race. The storm giants want to make alliances with the small folk, the frost giants are out raiding settlements in search of a magic ring, and the stone giants are tearing cities apart because they believe the surface

world is a delusional dream. As each race pursues these goals, they place Story Markers on the board that are unique to their race, and can later complete Event Cards and gain other bonuses to accomplish their unique goals.

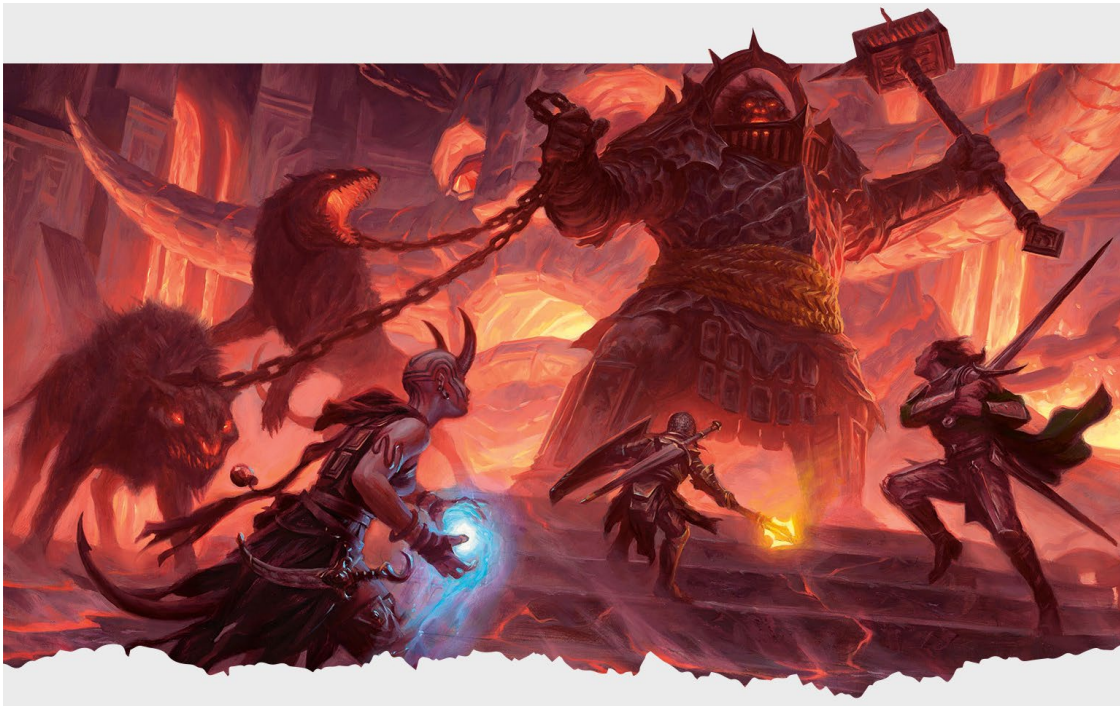
What distinctive characteristics do the different giant races bring to bear?

This is really one of the most fun parts of the game. Some of the giants are extremely serious, and have serious goals. The storm giants are trying to rescue their king from a malevolent blue dragon, so they're out to make friends with the local people in the hope of getting help with the search. The frost giants think the world needs to be frozen solid, and the cloud giants are out for treasure and artifacts.

Meanwhile, the hill giants have one idea and one idea only: find as much food as possible! Chief Guh of the hill giants believes that if she becomes the largest giant in the world, the other giants will have no choice but to bow to her superiority. So she sends all her husbands out to steal tons of food from the surrounding regions, and the hill giant player has to make sure Guh devours that food as quickly as possible!

What's your favorite giant race to play?

If I had to pick one, it would probably be the fire giants, because they're the most dependent on their race's storyline. Their leader Duke Zalto seeks to reassemble an ancient dragon-slaying titan called the Vonindod to prove that the giants still have what it takes to destroy their draconic enemies. To do this, he inhabits an ancient giant forge in the north, but soon realizes that he needs to power it by stealing an ancient elemental—called a fire primordial—from the dwarves. So as the player of the fire giants, you need to steal the fire primordial, assemble the pieces of the Vonindod, forge the great Titan of Death, and then go out and slay dragons. All the while, the other giants are getting in your way, pursuing their own goals. It really creates a lot of fun and tension.



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Was it difficult to balance out the characteristics of each race?

That was our number-one challenge throughout the development process. To keep things balanced, we assigned each unit an Ordning Value that determines the unit's cost and its XP value when defeated. Even though storm giants are much more powerful than hill giants, storm giants are also difficult to recruit and are worth a lot of points if other players can beat them. Conversely, hill giants are cheap and worth very few points. We also instituted different stacking limits for each of the giant races. Storm giants don't tend to trudge around in big packs, so you can prepare a big army of hill giants or stone giants and use them to gang up on a lone storm giant when the moment is right.

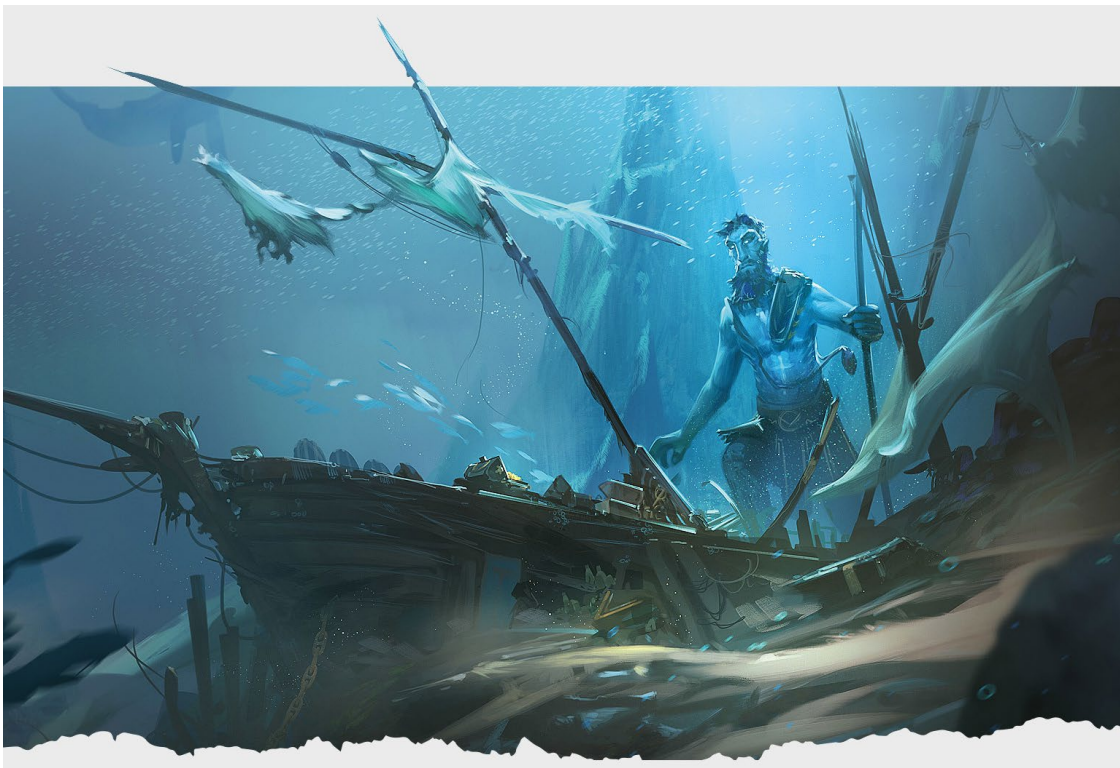
What kind of resources do you control, and how do they affect the game?

As giants go about plundering or negotiating with the small folk, they acquire Resource Cards. The most coveted resources are Runes, which are used to complete the Event Cards associated with each storyline, and also to complete generic Event Cards accessible to all

racers. There are some resources that are useful to all races, but which have special meaning to a particular race. For example, all players can use artifacts to strengthen their spells, but cloud giants also covet artifacts as part of their unique story. The same goes for fire giants and ore. Every giant can toss chunks of ore at their opponents to increase the number of hits they achieve during a fight, but fire giants also need ore to forge the Vonindod.

What kinds of strategies and tactics does each race need to employ to succeed?

It was very important to us that the game be strongly interactive right from the beginning. We used to joke that if some games feel like a knife fight in a closet, this game should feel like a knife fight in a sock drawer. In other words, because the giants' Starting Regions are very close together, they'll frequently wander into each other's way. Also, giants aren't allowed to invade one another's Starting Regions until late in the game, so players can freely vacate their Starting Regions to smash their opponents right from the start.



Ordnung Points are used to determine the winner of the game, and because each giant unit is worth a certain number of Ordnung Points, players usually score most of their points by fighting each other. However, players who attack later in the turn will gain the benefit of having more Command Cards on the table, so battle strategy often

involves deciding the best time to attack. Do you move as soon as you need to conquer a particular region, or do you wait until you're better prepared for the fight? And in addition to the battles, the storylines need to be juggled at the same time. Each player has to determine when they should be focused on pursuing their race's unique agenda, and when they should set up for a big assault against nearby giants.

[Which key locations and territories in the Forgotten Realms do the giants fight to control? What advantages do areas bring to each race once controlled?](#)

The game takes place in the Savage Frontier of Northwest Faerûn, and features many popular places like Neverwinter and Waterdeep. The strategic advantages for controlling locations depend on the events that the players are currently pursuing. For example, a multiplayer event called "The Divine Oracle" gives sudden strategic importance to the Spine of the World, and players will compete to get there in order to claim that event. Each Small Folk Region is featured in this way by a different event.

Sometimes a giant race's unique Event Cards will also focus on specific regions. Once the storm giants liberate their king, they need to travel to the Anauroch Desert to overthrow the blue dragon Iymrith. Similarly, the fire giants need to attack the dwarves of Gauntlgrym to steal the fire primordial Maegera, but this can put them into direct conflict with the frost giants if they're searching that area for the *Ring of Winter*.

[What are your favorite strategies for winning the game?](#)

The rulebook includes a strategy guide with general advice for all players, plus specific advice for each giant race. One of the things the guide stresses is the importance of finding the right opportunities to fight one another. Not only will you score the most points through battles, you'll also mess with your opponents' story goals by doing so.

It's also important to note that you can score just as many points when you're defending as when you're attacking. And since you score points for every giant you defeat, you can still score even if your force gets wiped out during a battle. Players who shy away from combat are going to find their point tallies coming up short during the

endgame. This also discourages a degenerate strategy, where one race can hang back and watch everyone else kill each other. In this game, that's a losing strategy. As we said many times during playtesting, "You gotta be in it to win it!"

"Players who shy away from combat are going to find their point tallies coming up short during the endgame".

[Assault of the Giants also comes with a variety of miniatures. What kinds of giant characters and models will people get to play with in the game?](#)

Each giant race is represented on the board by cardboard unit tokens that represent leaders, regular units, and elite units. But each race also has two massive Champion Figures that represent their most powerful entities. These giant miniatures (a definite oxymoron) are absolutely beautiful, and their sizes are relative to one another as they are in the world of D&D. Hill giants are about half the height of storm giants, with the other races ranging in between. The storm giants actually have a regular champion as well as a special figure for King Hekaton, who can enter play only after being freed from the clutches of the blue dragon.

Another fun aspect of the game features the three human giant slayers named Hook, Line, and Sinker, featured in the *Icons of the Realms: Storm King's Thunder* miniatures set. Whenever a player plays the Rest Command, they gain control of the neutral giant slayers on the board and can use them to attack the other players' giants. The giant slayers' tiny size makes their successful attacks against the giants seem that much more epic!

[Do you have any interesting stories from playtesting? How did it help refine the game?](#)

One of our biggest strides forward had to do with giant races that were having trouble finding the proper runes to complete their unique Event Cards. King Hekaton would go entire games without being rescued. The fire giants often never got the Vonindod built in time to actually send it out to slay dragons, and the frost giants would sometimes fail to freeze a single region. To mitigate this, we realized that some events should be able to be completed without spending a rune if some other special circumstance was activated. The first time

we tried this, we allowed the frost giants to freeze a region with the *Ring of Winter* even if they didn't have the proper rune, as long as Jarl Storvald was present. This meant that other players would need to pay attention once Storvald found the ring. Because players had largely ignored the frost giants' quest in the past, the frost giant player excitedly started freezing the entire west coast of Faerûn! The other players were shocked and suddenly turned against them, but it was way too late. You can bet that during future games, the frost giants weren't ignored anymore.

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Plane Shift Kaladesh

Magic: The Gathering's world of Kaladesh is a living work of art—a vibrant, beautiful plane where anything is possible

Optimism, innovation, and the spirit of creativity fuel an intoxicating renaissance of invention and artifice across Kaladesh. Its inhabitants frequently assert that “anything can be built,” and brilliant inventors seem to prove that saying every day. Now, this expansive guide allows DMs and players alike to transform Kaladesh into a setting for their D&D campaigns.

Whether making use of the adventure hooks and story seeds found in *The Art of Magic: The Gathering—Kaladesh*, or exploring the lore freely available at the *Magic* web site, you can take your lead from the inventors and tinkerers of Kaladesh as you customize and rebuild this world to make it your own.



For past Plane Shift articles, check out these guides for Zendikar (on the [Magic website](#)) and Innistrad (in *Dragon+*).

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Paint by Numbers Part 2: Beyond the Basics

Daniel Gelon takes on a fearsome cave bear to show players and DMs more advanced mini painting techniques

The previous issue of *Dragon+* featured **Paint by Numbers** —a **beginner's guide to painting miniature figures**. It proved highly popular, with countless *Dragon+* readers taking up arms and their paintbrushes to bring some color to their armies of unpainted minis. This issue picks up where the last left off, providing additional instruction for players and DMs looking to reinforce the basics and expand their repertoire of painting skills.

Daniel Gelon has over twenty-five years of painting experience, was one of the original artists for *Magic: The Gathering*, and is a long-time miniatures painting expert (as evidenced by this amazing **video tutorial series**). Daniel will be introducing *Dragon+* readers to a number of advanced techniques that don't take much time, but which can really make a miniature stand out on the tabletop.

Because I'm a gamer, I have a closet full of board games filled with unpainted miniatures. Whenever I find myself going back to a board

game that features miniatures and playing it repeatedly, I'm inspired to paint those miniatures to add to the experience. However, getting through all the minis in a game in a reasonable length of time means using quick techniques to get good-looking miniatures. They won't be competition quality, but they do look impressive on the table.

For a beginning painter, painting board game miniatures is a great way to practice advanced techniques, letting you refine those techniques before trying them out on your D&D minis. In this article, I'm going to let you follow along as I paint a miniature from start to finish, providing guidance along the way to help beginner painters advance from novice to intermediate level. I'll give you more information on some of the basic techniques you might have already tried, plus I'll introduce you to the powerful technique of wet blending colors.

The cave bear from the *Dungeons & Dragons: Wrath of Ashardalon* board game has always been one of my favorite sculpts. So with mini in hand, let's begin.



My painted bear squares off against its unpainted kin

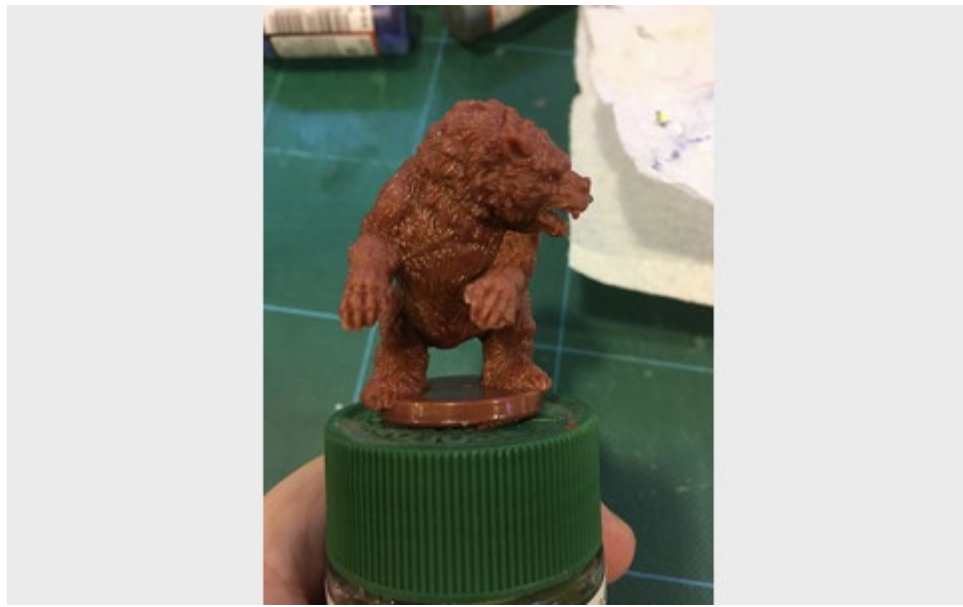
Prepping the Figure

The cave bear mini is fully assembled but not preprimed, so it'll need to be prepped before painting. It's a great idea to wash and scrub your minis in some soapy water. I use a normal soft toothbrush.

Why should you wash your figures? All minis come out of a mold, and have some sort of a mold release material on them to stop them from getting stuck. Even if you can't see it, some of that material will

most likely still be on your figure, and it can stop your paint from sticking properly. In addition, normal finger oils from handling the figure can affect the paint. I wash all the minis I work on, whether they're plastic, vinyl, resin, or metal.

Once a mini is washed, I don't want to reintroduce oils from my fingers while handling it as I paint. To prevent this, I can either wear disposable gloves or I can temporarily attach the mini to a base I can hold. For the bear, I'm going to use an old jar of paint as a painting base and attach the mini with a small ball of poster tack (available in any drugstore or office supply store). After placing the poster tack onto the center of the jar lid and pressing the miniature onto it, I can now move and paint the miniature without actually touching it.



The bear is mounted for easier handling

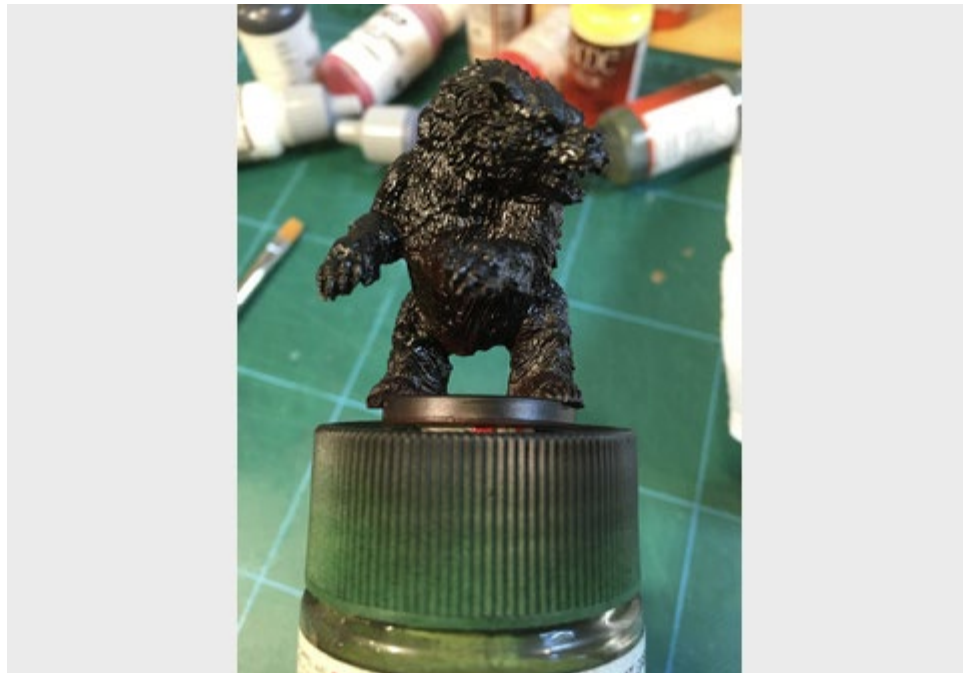
Priming the Figure

Priming your figures is essential, for two reasons. First, priming allows you to better see the miniature's details because it evens out any differences in color or surface shine. Second and more importantly, it provides a great surface that I know my paints will stick to without rubbing off. I prefer using spray primers, which can be found in hobby stores, rather than brush-on primers. In my experience, spray primer sticks better and gives you a more even coat.

Primers can be purchased in many colors, but basic primers come in black, gray, and white. If you get only one, choose either gray or

white. All acrylic model paints are slightly transparent, even though they might appear opaque, allowing the colors underneath to affect them.

Black primers tend to dull even bright colors, making them great for heavily armored figures or dark figures. White primer is good for figures that need bright colors, with the primer helping to “pop” the clarity of those colors. Gray primer is a good middle ground. My bear is going to use a color range from an almost-black dark brown to a light brown. I want the colors to have a naturalistic feel befitting a wild animal, so I’m going to start with black primer.



Primed and ready for painting

The combination of spray paint and finely detailed miniatures can be disastrous if you’re not careful. It’s very easy to overspray, causing drips and filling in details, but don’t worry—with a little patience, you can get good results every time. Make sure you shake the can for at least a minute to ensure a good spray. Your arm might get tired, but it will be worth it!

Keep the spray can about a foot away from the miniature while priming. Spray either in short controlled bursts, constantly turning the miniature; or with a constant spray, moving the miniature and the paint can so that it doesn’t glob up. After you do a complete rotation of the miniature, stop and let the coat dry even if the mini is not totally covered. It’s better to spray two or more light coats than to

risk obscuring details just to cover everything on the miniature all at once.

Base Coating

I'm ready to start blocking in the color on the cave bear, after looking at photos of actual grizzly bears. It's a good tip to try and check out photographs or pictures of your subject—or as close as you can get to it with fantasy art. I want the body to be a rich brown, growing lighter toward the back, and for the limbs to grow darker down toward the paws. The bear should then have a light muzzle and a black nose, with darker brown streaking from the cheeks.

The first step of actual painting is to give the bear a good solid base coat of medium brown over its whole body. I'll paint the mouth a burgundy color, ignoring the teeth for now. Because the paint is going over black, I know I'll need to do several coats, letting them thoroughly dry in between coats. My goal is for a solid brown without color variation. When painting base coats, make sure the paint bottle is well shaken beforehand. The consistency you want for your paint is that of heavy cream: liquid, but with a little thickness. Your paint might come out of the bottle this way. If so great, paint away. But if it's too thick, add just a little water and check the consistency.

Keep adding water and checking until the consistency is right. And take your time. You can always add some water if the paint is still too thick, but you can't remove water if the paint becomes too runny. With a base coat, the goal is to be able to apply several even coats that cover the high points of the mini without pooling in its recesses, to get a solid, even color. Apply the paint with a large, soft brush. The number of coats you'll need depends on the paint, because some colors are more opaque than others. Yellows are notoriously transparent, and often need several coats.



The base-coated bear (front and back)

Blending Colors

Creating smooth color transitions can elevate a basic paint job into a masterpiece. There are many different techniques to accomplish this, some with interchangeable names: blending, wet blending, feathering, layering, and glazing, to name just a few. The technique I'll be using for the cave bear is one that I've seen referred to as both feathering and wet blending. This technique works best when dealing with larger areas.

I'm going to start by lightening the bear's back and snout. On my palette, I set up some of the starting brown that I used for the base coat. Next to it, I have the light brown I want to end on. Starting on the bear's side and moving onto the back, I apply the base coat brown again. But before it can fully dry, I mix in just a hint of the lightest brown with my base coat, then I start applying it to the back just a little distance in from where I applied the last coat. Since the paint is still a little wet, I can mix both shades together on the mini to get a smooth transition. Then I keep adding a little more of the lighter brown to the base, continuing to paint in smaller areas onto the back and blending it as I go. Eventually, I'm just painting with the lightest brown. I try to do at least five transitions for a smooth blend.



Progressively blending darker colors into lighter colors on the back

With the back finished, I move onto the limbs, which I want to be darker toward the paws. I use the same method, but my end color is a deep brown instead of a light brown.



Blending lighter into darker color on the limbs

If you're just starting out painting, minis of furry animals or figures with fur cloaks are great to practice blending on. Because of the abundance of texture in fur, even if you get a bit sloppy, the mini will hide it well.



The blending stage is finished

Applying Washes

A wash is just a thinned-down paint sloppily applied to a mini, so that it pools into the figure's recesses. When dried, a wash really helps accentuate the details of a mini. A wash needs to be thin enough that you're not painting the high points, but not so watery that the pigment won't show. There's no magical ratio of paint to water; it just takes some practice and experimenting to get it right.

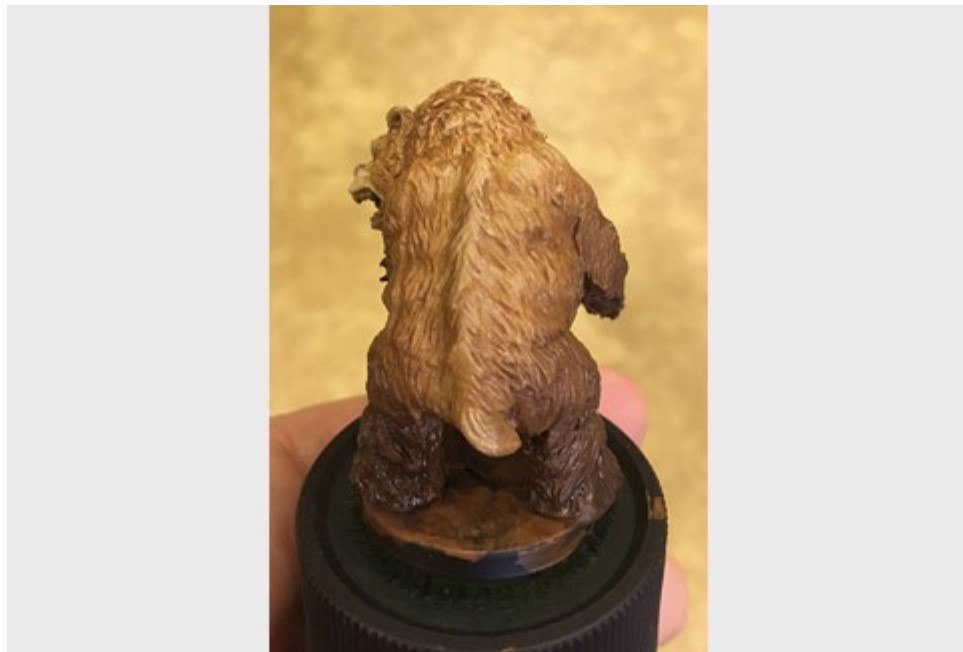


Good wash consistency

Your wash color should be darker than the color you're applying it to. On the cave bear, I use my base brown to wash the lighter areas, a dark brown to wash the base brown color, and black to wash the darker ends of the paws.



The washes applied (from various views)



What the wash looks like when dried

Dry Brushing

Dry brushing is a basic technique where the brush is loaded with a lighter color. Most of the color is then wiped off as the brush is lightly dragged across the surface of the mini, leaving the highest points of texture painted with feathered highlights. Like washes, dry brushing is a great way to emphasize a miniature's details. You need to use a soft brush—and preferably a wider brush. My favorite types of brushes to dry brush with are filbert brushes. They have a wide, rounded head that is great for soft edges.



The filbert brush

After applying paint to the brush, wipe it off a few times on a paper towel. At the point where the brush is applying just a little paint, I know I'm good to go.



A good level of paint for dry brushing

Just as with the washes, I'm applying several different dry brushings to the bear, depending on how dark or light the color is. Now the figure is starting to look good.



The dry brushing applied (front and back)

Finishing the Bear

Using fine brushes, I add the small details, painting the eyes, mouth, teeth, and claws. Despite being a relatively quick job, I'm happy with how the cave bear turned out—but it isn't quite ready to menace my adventurers just yet. As a gaming miniature, this bear will be handled quite a bit, so I want to add an extra layer of protection to prevent the paint from being rubbed or chipped off. To do this, I spray the miniature with a dull clear varnish.

The final step in painting a miniature is usually the base. Sometimes I'll just paint the bases of my minis a solid color, while other times, I'll add some groundwork to them. But since this piece is going to be used in my *Wrath of Ashardalon* game, I want the bear to have a clear base so I can see the game board underneath those hairy paws. The clear vinyl is easy to slice through with a hobby knife if you heat it first with a hair dryer. A little clear two-part epoxy will glue the mini to the base, and my cave bear is finished.



I hope you've enjoyed following along as I painted my cave bear. If you're a beginner painter, try your hand at some wet blending and experimenting with washes and dry brushing as explored in this article. Thank you for reading, and happy painting!

Even if you've never painted a miniature before, don't worry. March sees the release of **Nolzur's Marvelous Miniatures**, an all-new line of unpainted minis from WizKids. Featuring Dungeons & Dragons creatures and characters already fully primed and assembled, Nolzur's Marvelous Miniatures are a great opportunity to try out some of these painting techniques.

Though this guide is intended for people newer to miniature painting, more experienced painters can find endless resources online—including an entire **subreddit**. On the Wizards of the Coast website, Daniel Gelon created a **video tutorial series** detailing some miniature construction and painting techniques during D&D's *Elemental Evil* storyline.

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Behind the Screen

With the upcoming release of *Tales from the Yawning Portal*, we offer a preview of *Tomb of Horrors*—and some tips for running a unique version of that classic adventure

To paraphrase from the introduction to *Tales from the Yawning Portal*: Inside this book, you'll find seven of the deadliest dungeons from the history of D&D, updated for the current edition of the game. Some are classics that have hosted an untold number of adventurers, while others are newer creations boldly staking their place in the pantheon of notable D&D adventures.

Just as these dungeons have made an impression on D&D players, so too have tales of their dangers spread across the D&D multiverse. When the shadows grow long in Waterdeep, City of Splendors, and the fireplace in the taproom of the Yawning Portal dims to a deep crimson glow, adventurers from across the Sword Coast—and even some visiting from other D&D worlds—spin tales and rumors of lost treasures.

- A wanderer from the distant Shou Empire speaks of strange, leering devil faces carved into dungeon walls. These faces can devour an explorer in an instant, leaving behind not a single trace of the poor soul's passing.
- A bald, stern wizard clad in blue robes and speaking with a strange accent tells of a wizard who claimed three powerful weapons from a city on the shores of a lake of unknown depths. Spiriting those relics away to a slumbering volcano, this wizard then dared adventurers to enter his lair and recover them.
- A one-eyed dwarf spins tales of a castle that fell into the earth, and whose ruins stand above a subterranean grove dominated by a tree that spawns evil.

These are just a few of the tales that have spread across the Sword Coast from the farthest reaches of Faerûn and beyond. The minor details change with the telling. The dread tomb of Acererak shifts its location from a dismal swamp to a searing desert or some other forbidding clime in each version of events. But the key elements remain the same, lending a thread of truth to each tale.

Previewing 'Tales from the Yawning Portal'

D&D's deadliest dungeons become part of your arsenal of adventures on April 4. Enjoy, and remember to keep a few spare character sheets handy!

In advance of the book's release, we wanted to take an early look at *Tales from the Yawning Portal*. First, the cover. There's Durnan, of course, the Yawning Portal's friendly barkeep—and featured behind him, shadowy figures from some of the more famous yarns he's heard told throughout the years. D&D senior creative art director Shauna Narciso helped direct this piece created by Tyler Jacobson. The cover art makes use of images from the book's famed dungeons, which we've numbered within the key art.

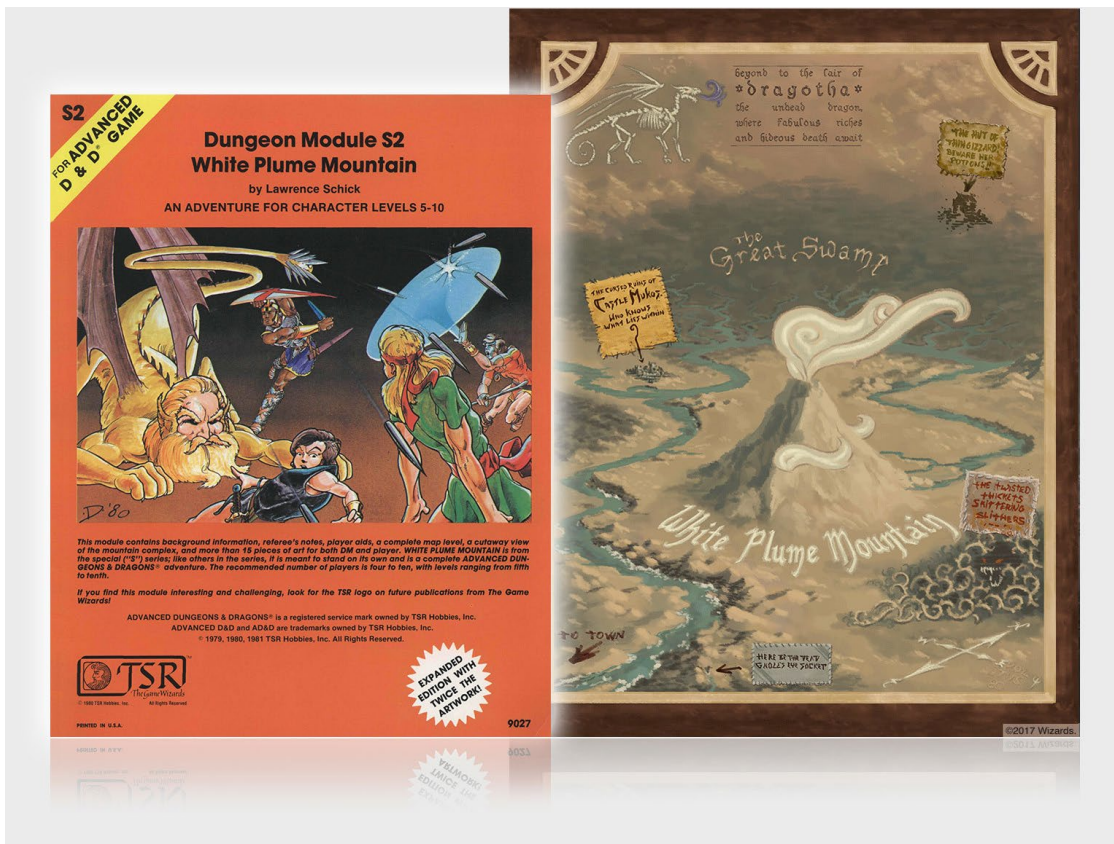
1. Gargoyle (*Tomb of Horrors*)
2. Tarul Var (*Dead in Thay*)
3. Mialec (*The Sunless Citadel*)

4. Sir Bluto Sans Pite (*White Plume Mountain*)
5. Tordek (*The Forge of Fury*)
6. Xipe, the oni (*The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan*)
7. Manticore (*White Plume Mountain*)
8. Kieren, Chosen of Ilmater (*Dead in Thay*)

With the exception of the most recent adventure featured in the book (*Dead in Thay*), each tale also features updated key art, showcased below alongside the adventures' original covers.



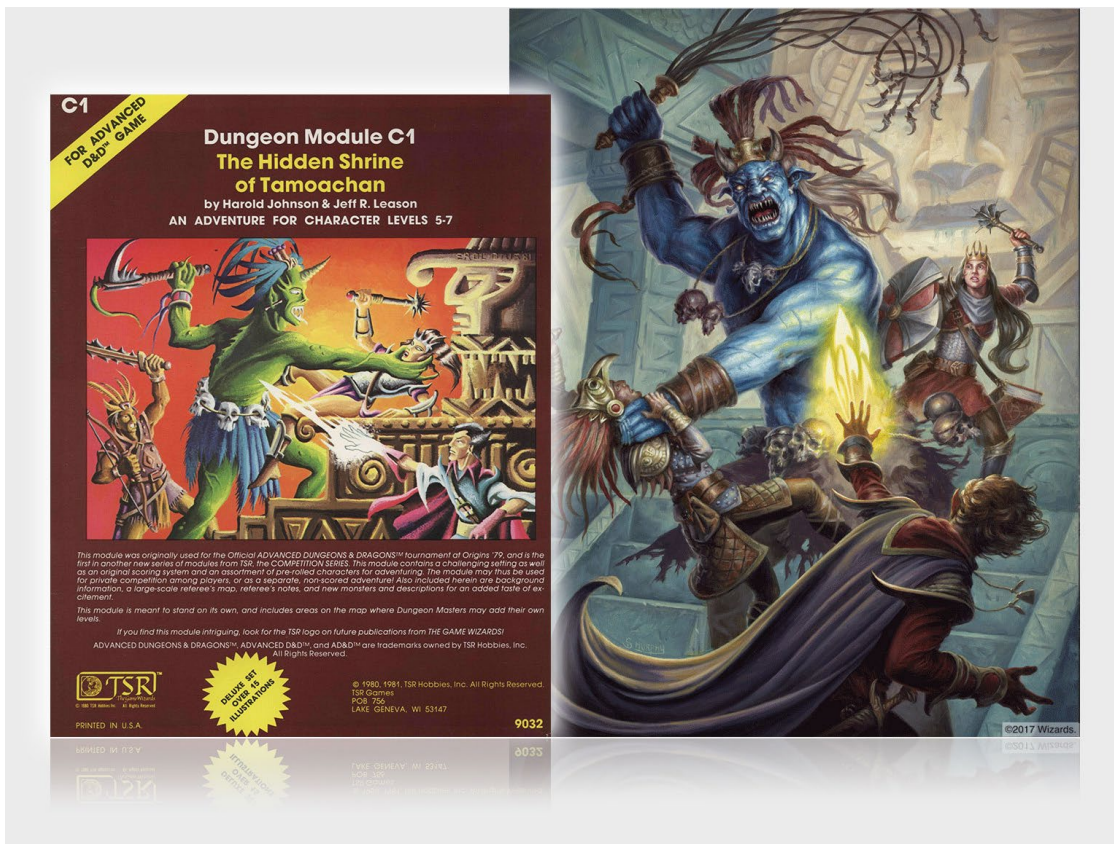
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And as an additional preview for this issue, let's take a look at the first few pages from *Tomb of Horrors*.

Behind the Screens: Tomb of Horrors



(Select to view)

Thankfully, there's no shortage of books, films, and ongoing series to inspire a D&D gaming session, for players and DMs alike. (I suspect, and indeed rather hope, that *Game of Thrones*' "Battle of the Bastards" has played out at tables in endless epic variations since airing.) So with this issue's *Tales from the Yawning Portal* preview, let's turn to one of the greatest movies to ever present its own take on dungeon delving—as well as simply one of the greatest movies of all time!

I refer, of course, to *The Goonies*...

Okay, I might be slightly biased here. I grew up with *The Goonies*. When it was released in 1985, I was the same age as its protagonists. Inspired by Data, I even built a zip line in my yard. For my birthday in 2010, I visited Astoria, Oregon, specifically to see the Goonies House (still there!) and attend the film's twenty-fifth anniversary celebration.

So yeah, I love this film. And all its many parodies. (Looking at you, *Teen Titans Go!* "Booty Scooty" episode.) Of course, it helped that the plot of *The Goonies*—a search for treasure complete with maps, riddles, clues, and dangerous traps—also resonated with another of my hobbies, Dungeons & Dragons.

When *Tales from the Yawning Portal* releases on April 4, you'll find *Tomb of Horrors* updated to fifth edition rules within its pages. Over the most recent Martin Luther King Day weekend, I reunited with my old gaming group and ran them through the updated tomb. It's a challenging adventure both to play and to run, with killer traps aplenty, secret doors that defy obvious placement, and a final ultra-powerful opponent waiting patiently to destroy the hasty and unwary.

In order to customize and better run the adventure, I combined my two great loves and ran *Tomb of Horrors* with a Goonies-style mod—which you are absolutely encouraged to implement in your own games.

The Goonies

These sessions were a nostalgia-

fest, to be sure. So I asked my players to submit their favorite characters from first edition AD&D, which I updated to fifth edition. This was mainly accomplished by modifying existing pregenerated characters (and which reminded me that we could stand to release more pregens). I filled their spellbooks with spells that would best assist in a dungeon crawl (*detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *divination*, *find the path*, *find traps*, *legend lore*, *locate object*, and so forth). And since the characters were coming from AD&D, I called out their bonuses to Locate Secret Doors and Find/Remove Traps separately on their sheets.



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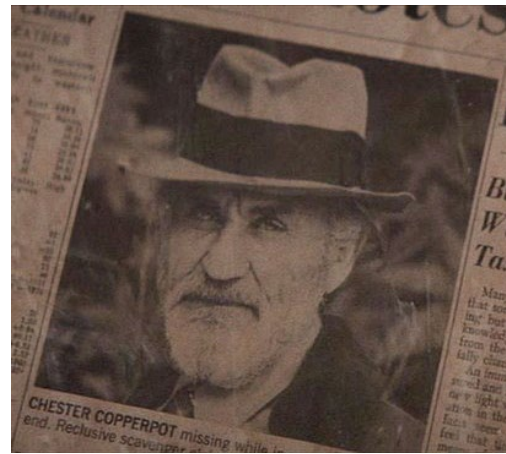
The party also had a patron. After decades of research, the location of the tomb was finally discovered by a brain in a jar (a memorable undead monster from third edition D&D). But, being a brain in a jar, the evil mastermind needed the party to actually explore the site. The brain would provide a map of the tomb's location as well as the use of certain items in its possession (an opportunity to outfit the party appropriately) in exchange for Acererak's skull. The adventurers could keep anything else they found.

To further assist the party, the brain provided a retinue of assistants—halfling commoners representing the Goonies. With names and specialties to match, the halflings served as torchbearers, porters, door testers, and so on.

Chester Copperpot

In the film, the Goonies weren't the first ones to go after the treasure of One-Eyed Willy.

Chester Copperpot disappeared during his own attempt, killed by the pirate's traps. In my game, I likewise hinted that previous explorers had made ill-fated attempts to explore the Tomb of Horrors. Their bodies were then set up to be discovered along the way, in some cases possessing fragments of the tomb's map.



(Select to view)

To create these fragments, I printed out the actual adventure map and aged it, then tore it into pieces. These pieces were planted at various checkpoints, taking care that each map piece mainly showed where the party had already come from (to help orientate them) as well as revealing a little of what was ahead. Each map piece was a well-earned reveal that helped speed the characters through some of the dungeon's more troublesome secret doors and dead ends.

(Aging a map would have fitted well in last issue's discussions on DIY and crafting! There are countless resources for doing so available on YouTube, employing both [physical methods](#) and [digital techniques](#).)

The Fratellis

With any deadly dungeon, it's reasonable for the players to want to explore at their leisure, prolonging the adventure by being overly cautious—but I needed to get my group through the tomb by the end of our weekend together. To increase the pace, I introduced the tomb's version of the Fratelli gang—the criminals chasing the Goonies through the tunnels,



Mama Fratelli (select to view)

always one step behind.

In our scenario, the brain in a jar hired multiple parties to assault the tomb, assuming that some would fail along the way and be leapfrogged by other groups. The players just happened to be the first group, and to succeed far better than expected. Behind them, the latter groups harried them along, encouraging forward progress. Combined with the relatively linear nature of the dungeon, no backtracking by the players was ever really needed.

These NPCs also provided added combat encounters, dialed up in whatever way the players' mood and the pacing dictated. And since the players were using only some of their favorite old characters as their PCs, these NPCs were drawn from their other unused characters. Surprisingly, the players felt no compunction about duking it out with their old PCs. The party went after them with abandon, striking temporary deals as needed, only to double-cross the other groups constantly and gleefully.

Aftermath

In the end, the party managed to complete the dungeon and secure the treasure after several sessions. With game time to spare (and knowing it would be a while before we'd get a chance to play together again), the players opted to continue the adventure by returning to the patron. Why did he want Acererak's skull anyway? As some new magical housing for his brain? A final fight ensued, with the brain in a jar defeated (despite being socketed onto the head of a powerful girallon), after which the adventurers took over his criminal guild as their own.

You can find out more about *Tales from the Yawning Portal* at its [official product page](#). And though there's no brain in a jar officially published for fifth edition (yet), you can find the girallon in *Volo's Guide to Monsters*.

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The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

Prepare for a demonic feast as we tuck into the
Banquet of the Damned



Welcome to another excursion through the very best of the Dungeon Masters Guild, where a host of user-made campaigns, adventures, supplements and playing aids await you—all created by D&D fans just like yourself. Anyone can publish on the DMs Guild, and the hundreds of products uploaded there since its launch provide a veritable treasure trove of adventure. Each issue, *Dragon+* will be shining a spotlight on some of the very best of that content.

This month's carefully curated selection is *Banquet of the Damned*, an intriguing escapade that begins with a methodical detective investigation, then builds to an all-action finale. Written by Benoit de

Bernardy of the newly relaunched **Goblin Stone Press**, this adventure for 4th-level characters is centered around a seemingly innocent pie-making contest that hides a dark conspiracy in Womford, a once-bucolic village in the Forgotten Realms.

We've made *Banquet of the Damned* available as an exclusive free download for *Dragon+* readers (*see download link*), which you can make use of anytime while the current issue is live. But before you rush off to claim your free adventure, enjoy a chat with creator Benoit de Bernardy to learn more about the making of *Banquet of the Damned*, to hear his thoughts on the DMs Guild, and to pick up some practical tips for creating your own adventures.

If you intend to go through *Banquet of the Damned* as a player, the following interview contains major spoilers that will seriously affect your enjoyment of the adventure. You might wish to wait until after you've completed the adventure before reading this interview.

Tell us a bit about your background. How did you first get into playing D&D? Are you still playing now?

Benoit de Bernardy: I started playing D&D almost thirty years ago. My brother went over to our cousins' for a sleepover and came back with the red box D&D Basic Rules. I was instantly intrigued by the red dragon on the cover, and I rolled up my first character that very day. My brothers and I then spent the rest of our summer vacation playing, and I've been hooked ever since. Unfortunately, I don't have a stable group right now, but I occasionally manage to convince my wife and her friends to play D&D.

What kind of DM are you? What kind of experience do you aim to give your players?

I like to immerse my players in the game world, challenge them with interesting problems to solve, give them opportunities to roleplay their characters, and, of course, give them plenty of monsters to slay. I think I'm a fairly easygoing DM. I have my preferences, but I acknowledge that there's more than one way to enjoy the game. I do my best to adapt to my players and to entertain them, and so far it seems to be working.

I also tend to be strict about the rules, and I make all my die rolls in the open. I had many arguments with players in the past because of

questionable rulings, and it really ruined the game for me. When everything is transparent, your players know why their characters died, but they also occasionally get an easy win because of a few lucky die rolls. Randomness is part of the game, so you might as well embrace it. It's the fear of a few bad die rolls that makes your dungeon crawls scary!

What inspired you to create *Banquet of the Damned*? How did the idea for the adventure first come about?

Banquet of the Damned is actually an adaptation of a side trek I wrote a long time ago. The original story was about two farmers who would do anything to win a pie-making contest. It was a short investigation in which the PCs had to find evidence that one of the contestants had set fire to the other's oven. It was fairly straightforward. The characters had to find the shattered glass with traces of Greek fire around the house, track the vials back to a group of peddlers outside of town, and convince them to reveal the identity of their client. When adapting the adventure to fifth edition, I thought the initial plot was a bit too obvious, so I started searching for a new bad guy. I eventually imagined the gulabus—a demon of gluttony—and I fleshed out the idea with a little help from Gary Travis.

Banquet of the Damned mixes good old-fashioned detective work with some fine action. Do you prefer this kind of more thoughtful adventure to a classic dungeon crawl?

I like it when adventures mix problem solving with hack-and-slash. I often start my adventures with an investigation, and then continue with a good old dungeon crawl, but I also like other structures. I absolutely adore adventures in which the PCs have to sneak into the enemy's lair and sabotage its defenses, turn factions against each other, and imagine creative ways to win what should have been an unwinnable fight.

Do you have a guiding philosophy or particular goals when it comes to designing your adventures?

Absolutely! I try to have a solid story, and I make my adventures as fun and engaging as possible. I spend a lot of time working on the plot and making sure that it's airtight. This is important because sometimes DMs need to improvise, and they need to understand the logic that drives the bad guys to do things, but without the players noticing. I also spend time fleshing out places and NPCs, and

imagining more than one solution to every problem—especially in an investigation, to avoid bottlenecks. Finally, I make sure everything is consistent. For example, if I'm going to put orcs living next to a gelatinous cube, there has to be a good reason why the ooze isn't feeding on the orcs. Immersing my players in a fantasy world is very important to me, and inconsistencies tend to get in the way of my fun.

The demonic pie at the center of *Banquet* is inspired! How did that idea arise?

I got the idea while talking with my podiatrist! During one of our sessions, she told me about her ex-husband, who had left her for a succubus. At that time, I was still brainstorming on the adventure and that's when it hit me. If there was a demon of lust, there had to be a demon of gluttony.



Once I had the bad guy, the rest came fairly naturally. I prefer when demons use subterfuge to tempt their mortal prey. If the succubus uses her charms to corrupt humans, then the gulabus had to use food. The original title of the adventure was *Apple Pie*, so it felt only natural to use the pies. As a side note, I changed the title because Dan Coleman (fortunately) published a module called *Bad Apples* a week before I put *Banquet of the Damned* on the Dungeon Masters Guild.

Banquet of the Damned is full of memorable and well-realized characters. How do you approach NPC design?

I usually find inspiration in clichés, movies, books, and in the people who made a big impression in my life. For example, Mortimer the baker is a lot like my late grandfather, Baron Harrick is a bit like Kronk in *The Emperor's New Groove*, and Marla, the owner of



Barron Harrick (select to view)

the Spitfire Inn, is the old lady at the supermarket who talks to everybody because she's lonely.

Once I have the base characters, I then give each of them one or two defining traits. That's usually enough to make an NPC memorable, because the characters rarely interact with them more than once or twice.

The village is very well realized. How did you give Womford such an authentic feel?

I started with the description of Womford I found in *Princes of the Apocalypse*, then made up the rest. I love history, and I've spent a lot of time visiting medieval castles, churches, and villages with my dad and my brothers in France. That's what gave me the idea to put a big parish church in the middle of Womford, and to use the statue of Saint Jeremy. Nobles held positions similar to governors or mayors during the Middle Ages, so there also had to be a baron or an earl. I then had to explain who these characters were and why Harrick let a bunch of thugs take control of his village. I then added a couple of shops and inns, and that was it!



Womford (select to view)

How do you aim to balance risk and reward for your players?
 I don't! I just put loot in logical places—for example, in a vault or a chest—and I put the critters where they should be: defending the gates, eating in the dining room, sleeping in a cavern. I'm sure there are benefits to other approaches, but this is the one that works best for me. It's part of the whole "staying consistent to enhance player immersion" philosophy. I don't think I have the skills to properly assess the risk anyway. I never know how my players are going to tackle a problem, and every party has different strengths and weaknesses.

Banquet of the Damned features some great artwork and maps. What can you tell us about the artists who worked on the adventure and your approach to presentation?

Raluca Marinescu is a young artist from Romania. She's the person who did the gulabus on the cover, and all the interior art (minus the maps). We were only supposed to work together on one module, but after realizing how talented she was, I asked her to do the covers of all my upcoming adventures and supplements, and some of the interior illustrations.

I did the maps myself. I originally wanted to work with Mike Schley and Jared Blando, but they were out of my budget. I didn't have any luck finding another cartographer, so my wife bought me a drawing tablet for Christmas a year ago, and I learned how to make them.



(Select to view)

The presentation of an adventure is extremely important to me. A clean layout makes a document easier to read, and good artwork complements the writing by stimulating the imagination of the reader. It also adds variety to the job, and ultimately makes it more enjoyable. I had a lot of fun doing the maps and the layouts, and working with Mara on the illustrations. It's not always easy for a complete amateur like myself, but I was fortunate enough to have my friend Chris over at [Loresmyth](#) help me with the more difficult parts.

What's your experience been like with the DMs Guild? How have you found it as a platform for getting your adventures to a wider audience?

As a customer, I think it's fabulous. I love browsing through the guild and seeing what's new. I don't always use the content I download as written, but it's a great source of inspiration and a good starting point to make your own homebrew stuff. I just wish Kobold Press could release more products on it!



(Select to view)

As a publisher, I love that I can use all of D&D's intellectual property for my adventures and supplements. When I learned I could finally write modules in the Forgotten Realms, I was so excited that it took me two days to calm down. I also think it's a great platform to get people to know your work, because it's not as crowded as other websites, and only people interested in D&D visit it.

What tips would you offer potential DMs and designers looking to create their own adventures for the DMs Guild?

I think the most important things are to surround yourself with people who aren't afraid to hurt your feelings, and to bury whatever ego you might have. Everybody makes mistakes, but you won't be able to fix them if you don't know where they are, or if you ignore constructive criticism. The first time my brother read one of my adventures, he told me that my writing was disgusting and that the structure of the adventure was a stinking mess. That was a promising start ...

I would also recommend taking your time to make sure everything is polished before uploading your adventures. Good ideas don't all come at once. Sometimes, I let an adventure rest for a couple of weeks, work on something else, and then get back to it. You'd be surprised how different your own draft looks after letting it sit for a while! This is really important because it will give your adventures a professional feel. A fancy cover will get people to visit your product

page, but at the end of the day, they'll only judge you on your writing.



Fiendish-Maggot (select to view)

What can you tell us about Goblin Stone Publishing, whose website you've just relaunched. What are your aims for your publishing house?

Goblin Stone is a project I have been working on full time for almost two years now. I've always wanted to work in the RPG industry but I never had the courage to take the leap. When I first moved to Peru, I wasn't legally allowed to work there, so I figured I might as well give it a shot! Now that Team Goblin seems to be stable, I think we're finally ready to publish four or five D&D products per year (mostly adventures for now), and to start working with freelance writers. I also hope we'll manage to convince more people to support our freebie adventures program on **Patreon**.

What's next for you? Have you got any further ideas for new D&D projects, adventures, and campaigns?

I'd like to start publishing printed adventures and supplements on the DMs Guild, so I'm mostly going to work on larger projects from now on. I just finished writing a massive seventy-five-page mystery that takes place in the Moonsea called *Silent Takeover*, and I'm currently writing another module.

I'd also like to publish adventures written by other D&D fans. I'll soon start working on an adventure with **Glen Cooper**. I'm really excited about this project because Glen has a fantastic imagination. I

think with his ideas and Mara's illustrations, the result will be spectacular.

Another new project is a compilation of side treks, similar to *Encounters in the Savage Frontier*, but focused on settled areas. As a DM, I enjoy spicing up my adventures with short investigations and small dungeon crawls that the PCs come across while exploring the world. This project will also give me the opportunity to work with multiple DMs Guild writers.

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Streaming Highlights

Mike Mearls unveils the secrets of the Yawning Portal, Chris Perkins wows PAX South, and Force Grey returns for a lost episode



Tales from the Yawning Portal



MIKE MEARLS
Senior Manager, Dungeons & Dragons

Mike Mearls, D&D's senior manager, introduces *Tales of the Yawning Portal*, where seven of the most famous dungeons from D&D's illustrious history await. Not only are they fully revised for fifth edition in this new hardcover tome, but you will be able to drop them straight into your existing campaigns, or even play them sequentially. Mike takes you on a journey from *The Sunless Citadel* through *White Plume Mountain* to the nerve-shredding *Tomb of Horrors*, and finishes with newest title *Dead in Thay*, in this exclusive sneak peek.

[Watch on Forbes](#)

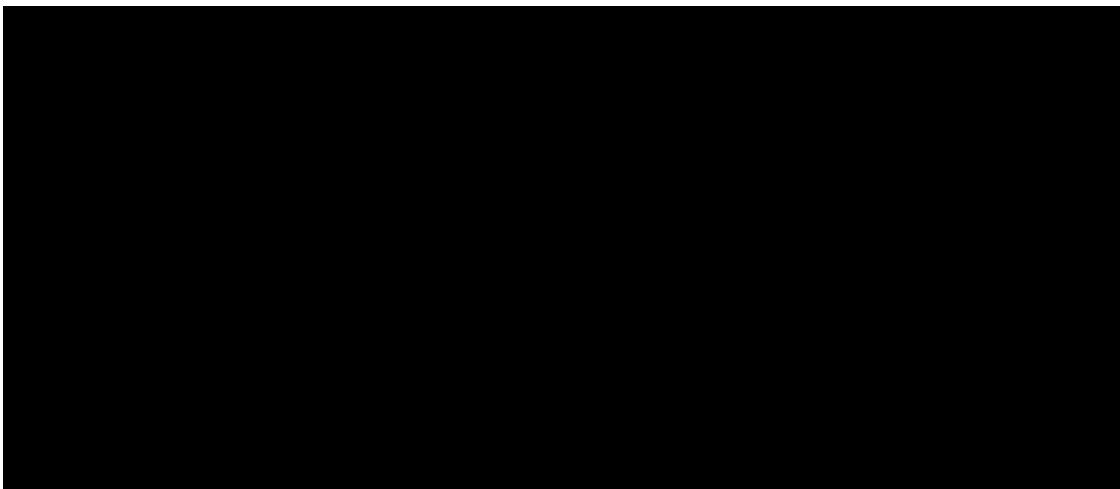
Storytime with Chris Perkins @ PAX South 2017

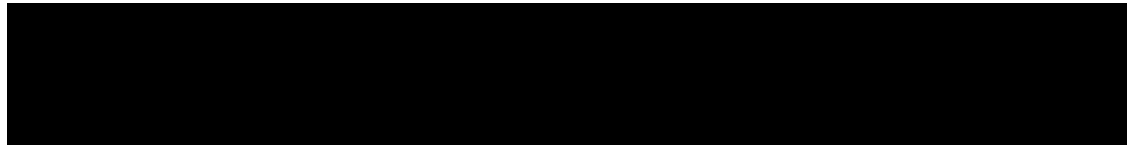


Chris Perkins, D&D's principal story designer, is a natural born storyteller and in his recent appearance at Pax South 2017 he used the stage to talk about how Dungeons & Dragons' DNA runs like a golden thread through much of modern media. In this fascinating lecture, Chris talks about D&D's impact on the gaming industry as a whole and how it has shaped his own personal storytelling. He also reveals the little-known tale of his own (brief) sojourn in the videogames industry, discloses his true spirit animals, personal ability scores (Int 6?) and shares some amusing D&D anecdotes.

[Watch on Twitch](#)

Force Grey: The Lost Episode





Last summer, a select band of celebrity adventurers came together at Meltdown Comics in Los Angeles to play a unique prologue to *Storm King's Thunder* under the auspices of super-DM Matthew Mercer. Subsequent episodes of Force Grey: Giant Hunters went on to earn over 1.1 million views on YouTube, as D&D fans thrilled to the group's giant-battling adventures. Yet the story didn't end there. In December, the mighty Force Grey reassembled at the Egyptian Theater, where Brian Posehn, Utkarsh Ambudkar, and Shelby Fero were joined by Emily V. Gordon and Dylan Sprouse for a special "Lost Episode," bringing the saga to an epic conclusion.

Dice, Camera, Action!

Now marking its thirty-fifth episode, Dice, Camera, Action! continues to thrive as one of the liveliest D&D sessions on YouTube. Join Dungeon Master extraordinaire Chris Perkins, along with YouTubers and streamers Holly Conrad, Jared Knabenbauer, Anna Prosser Robinson, and Nathan Sharp as they adventure in the Forgotten Realms in the latest D&D storyline, *Storm King's Thunder*.

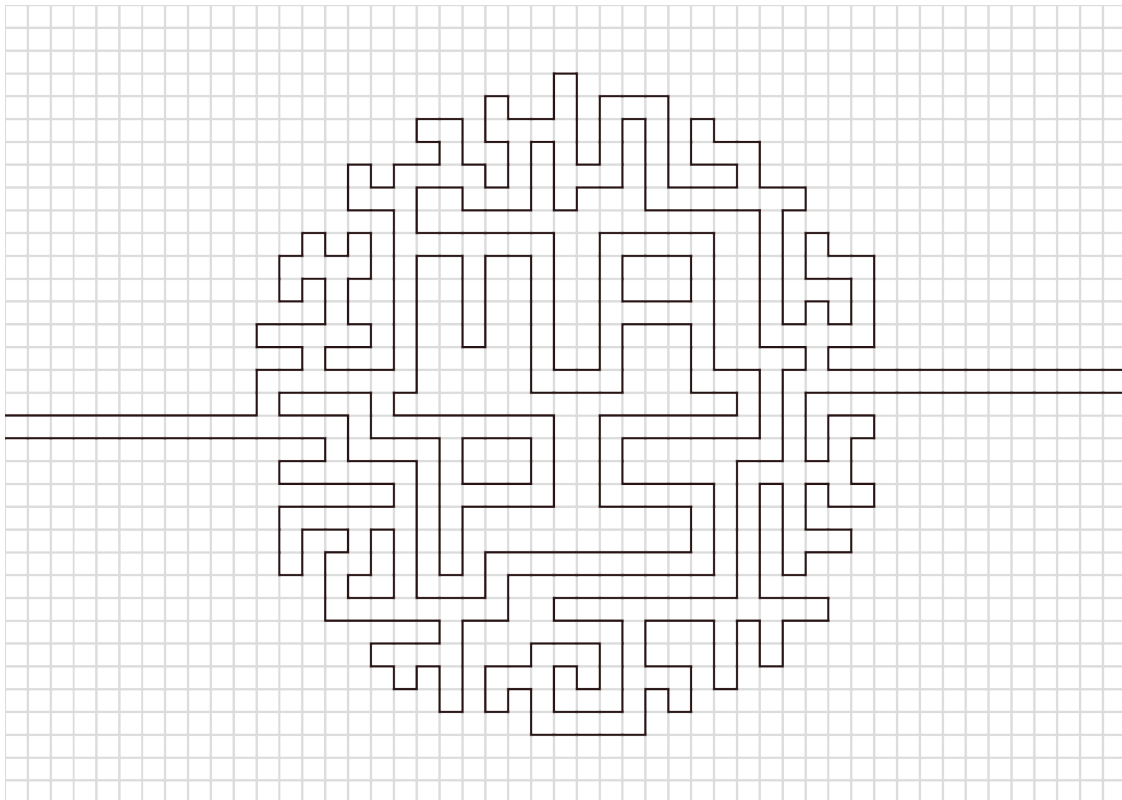
[See the playlist](#)



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Maps of the Month: Storm King's Thunder

For this issue, we're pleased to offer a selection of maps from Storm King's Thunder

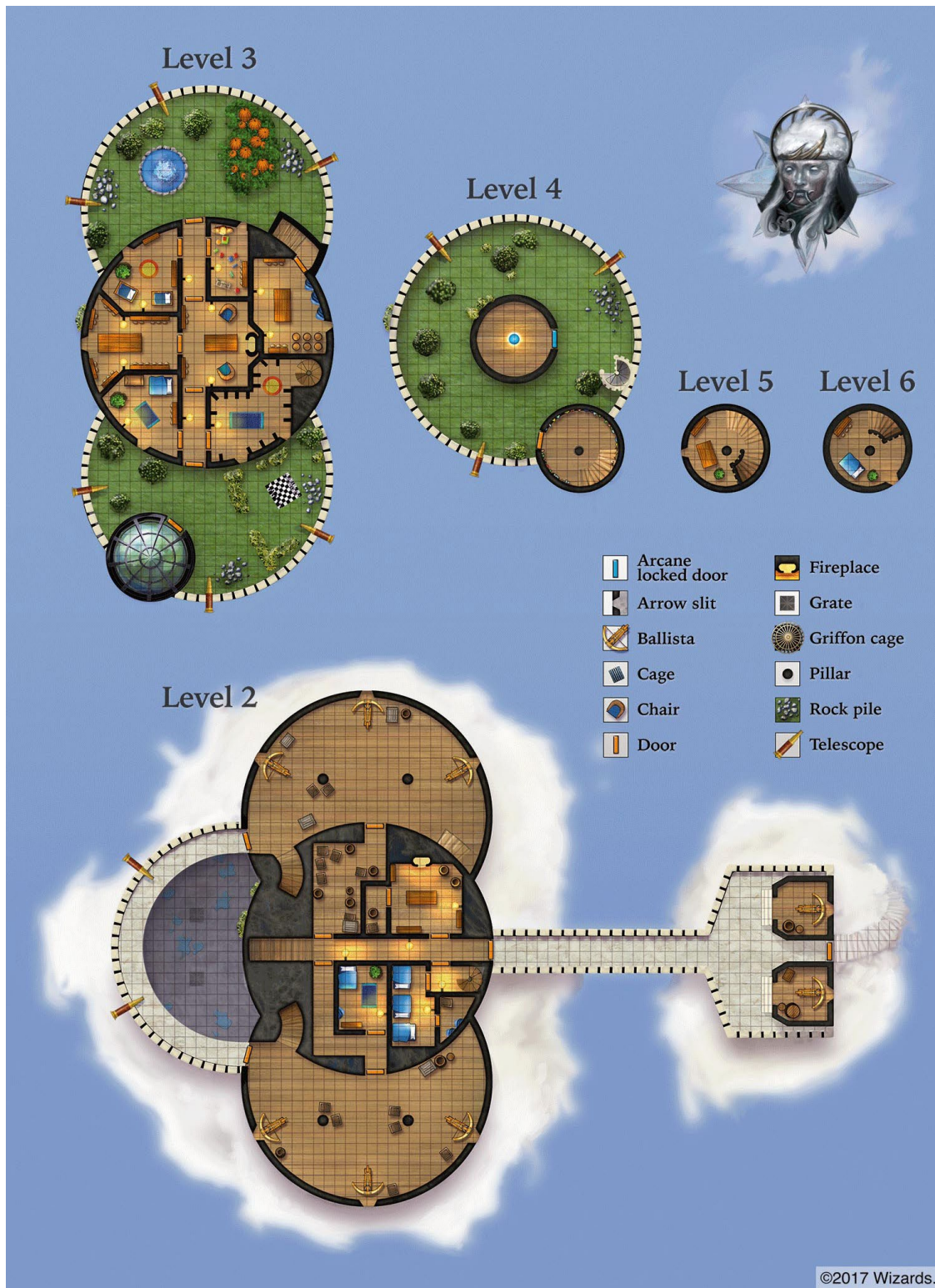


WARNING: THESE MAPS MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS

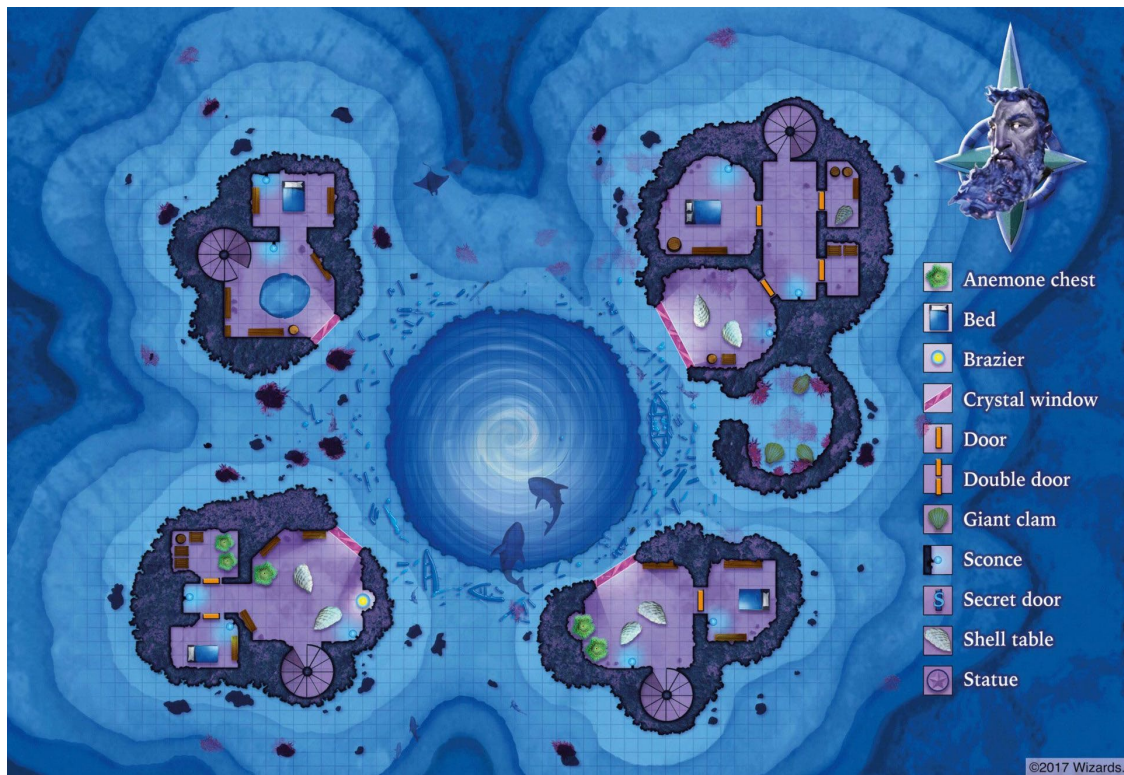


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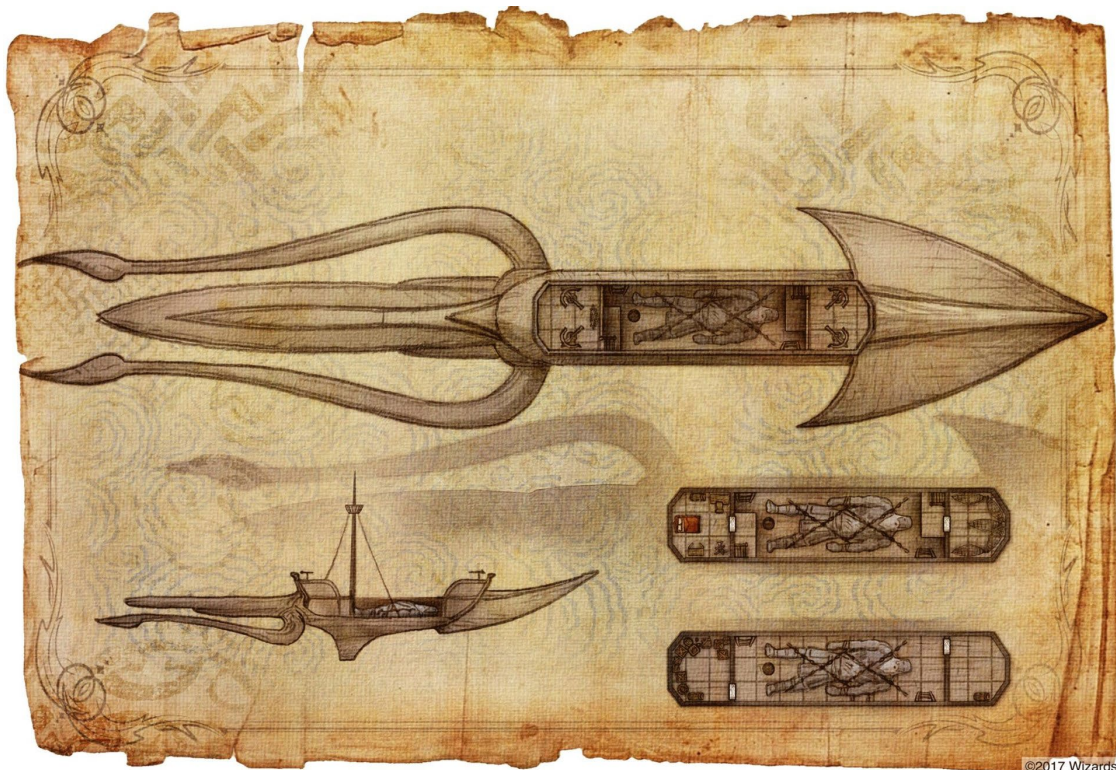
[Ironslag \(select to view\)](#)



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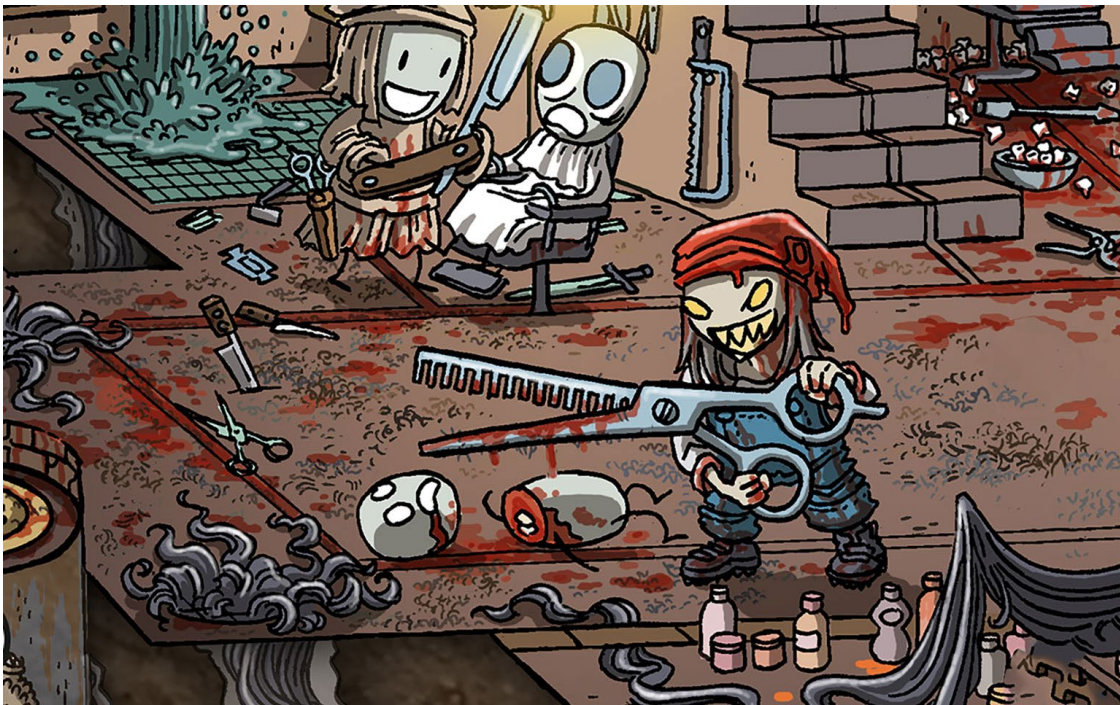


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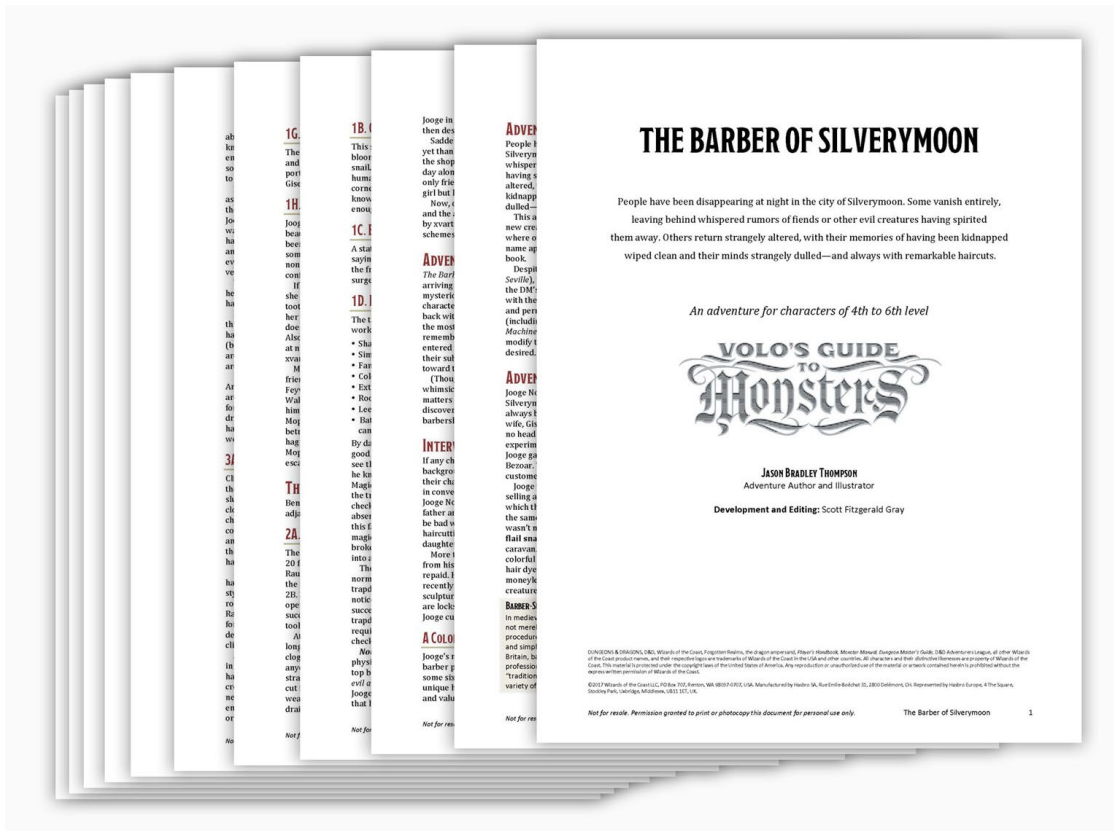
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The Barber of Silverymoon

From the pages of *Volo's Guide to Monsters* and the imagination of writer and illustrator Jason Bradley Thompson comes a uniquely hair-raising adventure



People have been disappearing at night in the city of Silverymoon. Some vanish entirely, leaving behind whispered rumors of fiends or other evil creatures having spirited them away. Others return strangely altered, with their memories of having been kidnapped wiped clean and their minds strangely dulled—and always with remarkable haircuts.



THE BARBER OF SILVERMOON

People have been disappearing at night in the city of Silvermoon. Some vanish entirely, leaving behind whispered rumors of fiends or other evil creatures having spirited them away. Others return strangely altered, with their memories of having been kidnapped wiped clean and their minds strangely dulled—and always with remarkable haircuts.

An adventure for characters of 4th to 6th level



JASON BRADLEY THOMPSON
Adventure Author and Illustrator

Development and Editing: Scott Fitzgerald Gray

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ADVENTURE SETUP

People have been disappearing at night in the city of Silverymoon. Some vanish entirely, leaving behind whispered rumors of fiends or other evil creatures having spirited them away. Others return strangely altered, with their memories of having been kidnapped wiped clean and their minds strangely dulled—and always with remarkable haircuts.

This adventure is designed to showcase some of the new creatures from *Volo's Guide to Monsters*. Except where otherwise indicated, whenever a monster's name appears in bold, it indicates a reference to that book.

Despite its title (a pun on the opera *The Barber of Seville*), this adventure can be set in any settlement of the DM's choice. But beware—this scenario might end with the player characters transformed in strange and permanent ways! Any such transformative effects (including the potent magic of the *Prismatic Coloring Machine*) are the purview of the DM, who is free to modify those effects or make them temporary as desired.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

Jooge Nopsmoth, a talented barber, has long lived in Silverymoon with his daughter, Mops. The two have always been happy, even after the death of Jooge's wife, Giselle, a few years ago—except that Jooge has no head for money and an excessive desire to experiment with new barbering techniques. One day, Jooge gave a haircut to a wandering **korred** named Bezoar. That strange fey creature became his regular customer, always coming to Jooge for cuts.

Jooge was able to earn a bit of extra money by selling art objects made from Bezoar's hair cuttings, which the korred's magical nature transformed into the same high-quality steel as Jooge's scissors. Still, it wasn't nearly enough for him to be able to afford the **flail snail** he saw offered for sale from a passing caravan. Jooge suspected correctly that the flail snail's colorful secretions could be used to make brilliant hair dyes, so he borrowed money from **darkling** moneylenders to be able to afford the wondrous creature.

BARBER-SURGEONS

In medieval Europe and the Forgotten Realms alike, barbers do not merely cut hair. They also perform a variety of medical procedures, including dentistry, bloodletting (using leeches), and simple surgeries and battlefield amputations. In real-world Britain, barbers and surgeons were not recognized as separate professions until 1745. The barbershop in this adventure is a "traditional" barbershop where haircuts, hairstyling, and a variety of surgical and dental operations are all performed.

WHERE'S THE MAP?

This unique adventure comes with an equally unique walk-through map, courtesy of author and illustrator Jason Bradley Thompson. Having created walk-through maps for classic D&D adventures both [old](#) and [new](#), Jason has this time turned his attention to *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, highlighting a number of the new creatures from that book in this chillingly humorous tale of evil barbering. DMs can download the walk-through map [here](#)—but players who might take part in the adventure are warned that the map contains major spoilers.

Unfortunately, the profits from selling those dyes proved not as high as Jooge had hoped. The darklings were soon pestering him to collect his debt. When they couldn't, the moneylenders sold that debt to a strange woman—actually a dreadful **annis hag** named Errevastica in disguise. The possessor of a malevolent magic item called the *evil comb*, the hag had long had her eye on Bezoar, and saw Jooge as a way to take control of the korred. The hag had become the leader of a group of **xvarts** by disguising herself as a beautiful female specimen that came to be known as "Xvartette." Visiting Jooge, the hag quickly took control of him and used him to capture the korred.

A HAIR-RAISING PLOT

By brushing Bezoar's hair with the *evil comb*, Errevastica turned the korred's luxurious locks into evil, living, tentacle-like hair that now does her bidding. Furthermore, the hag knew that this particular korred had a secret magic beyond the natural magic of its kind. Not only does its cut hair transform into the material of the tool or implement that cut it, that hair transforms into a living creature when cut or torn by another living creature's teeth, claws, or hands! Since capturing Bezoar and imprisoning the korred under the watchful gaze of the xvarts, the hag has allowed the xvarts to tear apart clumps of his hair. Those clumps are transformed into new xvarts, rapidly increasing their numbers as fast as the korred's hair can grow.

In a masterstroke of malevolence, the hag then forced Jooge to pull out two clumps of the korred's hair—one touched by the *evil comb* and one untouched. Those two clumps transformed into two new versions of Jooge: an evil version who is the hag's staunch ally, and a good version who was brainwashed to remove all memory of the hag.

Now, while the original Jooge rots in the hag's dungeons below the barbershop, good Jooge runs the shop by day, using it as a cover for the hag's nefarious activities. Evil Jooge runs the shop by night, using it to capture unsuspecting prey. Some of the shop's victims are eaten by the hag or sacrificed by the xvarts in their dungeon below the shop. Others are used by evil

Jooge in his diabolical barbering experiments, and then destroyed or brainwashed and set free.

Saddened by the mysterious changes in her father, yet thankfully unaware of all the evil goings-on below the shop, Jooge's daughter, Mops, spends most of the day alone in her room or playing in the garden. Her only friend is a **boggle**, which is devoted to the young girl but lives in fear of Errevastica.

Now, only the adventurers can stop the evil barber and the annis hag before all of Silverymoon is overrun by xvarts and tormented by evil Jooge's hair-cutting schemes.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Barber of Silverymoon begins with the characters arriving in the city and hearing rumors of the mysterious disappearances. The first time the characters hear how the returned victims all come back with their hair cropped, colored, and styled in the most exquisite ways, have one of the characters remember spotting Jooge's barbershop as the party entered the city. The rumors the characters hear and their subsequent inquiries eventually lead them toward the shop.

(Though it has its darker moments, this is a whimsical adventure, so don't worry too much about matters such as why no one else in Silverymoon has discovered the connection between Jooge's barbershop and the disappearances.)

INTERVIEWS AND INVESTIGATIONS

If any characters have the guild artisan or entertainer background, or if the players use roleplaying to have their characters engage any city NPCs of your choice in conversation, they learn that the barber-surgeon Jooge Nopsmoth is well regarded both as a good father and an expert barber. He is, however, known to be bad with money, always buying expensive new haircutting equipment and pricey gifts for his daughter, Mops.

More than once, Jooge has taken out small loans from his neighbors, though these are always repaid. His neighbors also know that Jooge has recently taken to carving and selling abstract metal sculptures shaped like locks of hair. (In truth, these are locks of korred hair, which turns to steel when Jooge cuts it with his scissors.)

A COLORFUL BUSINESS PLAN

Jooge's neighbors can also tell the characters that the barber purchased a flail snail from travelling wizards some six months ago, hoping to use it to create unique hair dyes and pigments. Flail snails are rare and valuable, and the people of Silverymoon were

impressed. For a brief time after that, a number of mysterious, short, cloaked figures were seen around the barbershop. Though many of his friends feared that these strangers might be planning a robbery, Jooge seemed unconcerned. In any case, the cloaked figures have not been seen in months.

If the adventurers ask specific questions about Jooge's work, one of his neighbors mentions how Jooge had one of his own teeth replaced with an iron tooth sometime within the last six months. Why Jooge didn't use a gold or porcelain replacement tooth, the neighbor doesn't know.

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

If any of the characters have the charlatan, criminal, or urchin backgrounds, or if the players use roleplaying to have their characters make further inquiries about Jooge's business, they learn that Jooge took out a loan of 10,000 gp from some criminals to buy the flail snail. Further research turns up that Jooge borrowed the money from **darkling** moneylenders—the cloaked figures seen by his friends and neighbors.

With a few clandestine inquiries, the adventurers can set up a meeting with the darklings, who tell the characters that after several unsuccessful attempts to get their money back from Jooge, they sold his debt to a mysterious rich human woman. The woman never gave her name; the darklings know only that she was beautiful (by human standards) except for the false teeth she wore, all of which were crafted of iron. (This woman was the annis hag Errevastica under the effect of its *disguise self* spell.)

If you feel as though the characters might need combat assistance in the adventure, one or two darklings can be hired as mercenaries at a rate of 100 gp each per day.

JOOGE'S BARBERSHOP

From the outside, Jooge's shop and house make up a modest, well-kept building whose only remarkable feature is the flail snail he keeps in his garden. But in the subterranean levels beneath the barbershop, Errevastica the annis hag has created a place of horror.

1A. WELL

The interior walls of this old stone well are damp and slippery. The water's surface is 20 feet below the ground. Climbing down to the water (area 2A) or back up again without the aid of a rope requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

1B. GARDEN

This small backyard garden contains geraniums in bloom, assorted plants and herbs, and Jooge's flail snail. The snail is mostly tame, but it shies away from humanoids it doesn't know. It attacks if touched or cornered. Jooge and Mops are the only ones who know the soothing song that calms the snail down enough for its colorful secretions to be harvested.

1C. BARBERSHOP FRONT DOOR

A statue of a gnome stands out front, holding a sign saying "Open" or "Closed." A string of teeth hangs in the front window, advertising that as a barber-surgeon, Jooge performs dentistry.

1D. BARBERSHOP MAIN ROOM

The talented but humble barber Jooge Nopsmoth works here. His prices are as follows:

- Shave: 5 cp
- Simple haircut: 2 sp
- Fancy haircut: 3–5 sp
- Coloring: 5 sp (in addition to haircut cost)
- Extract tooth: 2 sp
- Root canal: 1 gp
- Leeching (blood extraction): 1 gp
- Battlefield surgery: 5 gp (restores 1d8 hit points; can be performed only once per day per customer)

By day, the "good" false Jooge works here (neutral good **commoner** with Wisdom 6 and Charisma 15; see the *Monster Manual*). Good Jooge is friendly, but he knows nothing about any evil goings-on in the city. Magic such as *detect thoughts* reveals that he is telling the truth, and a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check notes that he seems somewhat distracted and absent-minded. However, a *detect magic* spell cast on this false Jooge notes a faint aura of transmutation magic around him. This aura cannot be dispelled or broken except by a *wish* spell, which turns Jooge back into a pile of hair.

The shop contains a sink, mirrors, a fireplace, and normal barbering and surgery equipment. A secret trapdoor sits under the barber chair, and can be noticed by a character searching the room with a successful DC 21 Wisdom (Perception) check. The trapdoor is barred from below during the day, requiring a successful DC 23 Strength (Athletics) check to break open.

Nothing but the Tooth. Good Jooge's one unusual physical trait is a magic iron tooth replacing his right top bicuspid. The tooth radiates evil under a *detect evil* and *good* spell. If he is asked about the tooth, Jooge doesn't remember where he got it, but assumes that he must have done dentistry on himself and

forgotten about it. The iron tooth allows the annis hag in area 4J to hear through good Jooge's ears. If the hag hears adventurers snooping around, it summons a **banderhobb** and orders the creature to deal with them that night. If any of the characters have Jooge cut their hair, the banderhobb uses that hair as a focus to find the characters and surprise them. If not, the characters might get some warning of the creature as it tracks them, at your discretion.

THE NIGHT SHIFT

At dusk, good Jooge closes his shop, makes dinner for Mops, and goes to bed. Three hours after dusk, evil Jooge (a neutral evil **warlock of the archfey**) ascends from area 3 in the cellars, reopens the shop, and runs it until dawn, accompanied by four **xvarts** from area 4J. The xvarts hide in area 1E, emerging only if evil Jooge is under attack or if he calls for them.

Evil Jooge has adapted the barber chair so that pushing a secret button on its back causes the armrests of the chair to turn into manacles. Anyone sitting in the chair is restrained and cannot use his or her hands. The trapdoor then drops open and the chair automatically slides down a specially constructed groove to area 2C below, with evil Jooge following close behind, then barring the door shut again.

If the adventurers come by while evil Jooge is running the shop, he tries to get the most formidable combatant to sit in the chair, then activates the manacles and drops that character underground. A character restrained in the chair must succeed on a DC 22 Strength (Athletics) check to break free. Jooge then calls in his xvart guards to deal with the other characters before heading downstairs.

1E. STOREROOM

This cluttered backroom contains wine (used as antiseptic), mandrake root and laudanum (both used as anesthetic), hair oils, pomades, scissors, clamps, drills, and other mundane equipment. A hole in the floor leads down to a disused well turned into a leech pit (area 2B), from which Jooge collects the leeches he uses for bloodletting. A Small or smaller creature can climb down the hole. While evil Jooge works at night, his four **xvart** guards are found here, snacking on leeches.

1F. UPSTAIRS LANDING AND KITCHEN

This area holds pots, pans, and dry foodstuffs, as well as a second fireplace with a small stove.

1G. JOOGE'S ROOM

The house's front bedroom contains Jooge's clothes and his life savings of 13 gp and 35 sp. A small portrait from happier times depicts Jooge, Mops, and Giselle, who died a few years ago.

1H. MOPS'S ROOM

Jooge's eight-year-old daughter Mops has a beautifully furnished room full of toys, but she has been sad the last few months because she senses something different about her father. A friendly and nonthreatening adventurer can win Mops's confidence.

If the characters are successful in talking to Mops, she confides that her father sometimes has an iron tooth, and sometimes doesn't. When he has the tooth, her father is absentminded and forgetful. When he doesn't have it, he becomes cruel and temperamental. Also, Mops sometimes hears people downstairs late at night talking in a strange language (these are the xvarts speaking Abyssal).

Mops is frequently visited by her new imaginary friend Wallace—a **boggle** summoned from the Feywild by her loneliness. Errevastica sensed Wallace's presence in the house and quickly cowed him into compliance, and is using him now to distract Mops from her father's state. Wallace will not directly betray Errevastica, but he fears that one day the annis hag might eat his new friend. If anyone threatens Mops, the boggle uses his powers to help Mops escape, even if he dies in the process.

THE CELLARS

Beneath Jooge's house, a series of old cellars and two adjacent wells conceal the annis hag's evil plots.

2A. BOTTOM OF WELL

The well shaft is 40 feet deep in total, with the bottom 20 feet filled with water that flows in from the River Raurin. A Small or smaller creature can squeeze down the narrow water-filled side channel leading to area 2B. Removing the grill that blocks the side channel, or opening the hatch leading to area 3A, requires a successful DC 18 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools.

At the bottom of the well, the water is filled with long strands of thick, black hair, all leading down to a clogged circular drain. The hair is living korred hair. If anyone attempts to cut through the hair, the cut strands transform into whatever material was used to cut it (typically steel, if the adventurers are using weapons). Any attempt to cut the hair or open the drain causes the hair to come to life and attack. Treat

the mass of hair as a **roper** (see the *Monster Manual*), but each tendril attack deals 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage and the hair has no bite attack.

If the living mass of hair is killed and cleared away from the drain, water pours from the river into the caverns beyond. See area 4A for details.

2B. LEECH PIT

Small numbers of leeches are found throughout the well water, but they are especially numerous in this disused well. Treat the leeches as a **swarm of insects** with a swimming speed of 10 feet and no other movement modes.

A grill marks the location of the side channel leading to area 2A. Removing the grill requires a successful DC 18 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools.

2C. STAIR

A 5-foot-wide staircase leads down from the barbershop to the cellars below Jooge's house. During the day, the trapdoor to area 1D is barred from below. A specially constructed groove cut into the stairs allows the barber's chair to slide automatically down and be pushed up again.

2D. GUARD ROOM

A single lantern lights this room, which is occupied at all times by eight **xvarts**. They attack any intruders, but the cowardly creatures flee down into area 3 if four or more of them are killed. A bell pull made of thick, dark hair runs up to the ceiling and through a hole in the wall, all the way down to area 4E. When the xvarts pull the hair, the korred in area 4E shouts in pain, and the xvarts in that area know that intruders are coming.

HAIR AND HORROR

Under the direction of evil Jooge, the second level of cellars beneath the shop has been transformed into a horridly efficient evil barbering operation.

3. BARBERSHOP OF EVIL

This cellar has been converted by evil Jooge into the ultimate lair of forbidden barbering techniques. Grooves in the floor allow one of three specially designed barber's chairs to be pushed up the stairs and to most locations on this level (except areas 3E and 3G, which are behind doors). The chamber is lit by lanterns at areas 3A and 3C.

This room is inhabited by evil Jooge by day, and whenever he captures a client. Since splitting off from the original Jooge, evil Jooge has gained magical

abilities and is now a **warlock of the archfey**. He knows that eventually he will become powerful enough that Errevastica will view him as a threat, and so he secretly plots against her even while pretending to care only about his mad barbering experiments.

Evil Jooge's assistant is a **redcap** that eagerly assists in the torment of his clients—sometimes to the point of becoming so excited that it ends evil Jooge's experiments prematurely. Because the redcap was created by Errevastica, it technically serves the hag. However, it spends all its time with evil Jooge and is fond of him. The redcap doesn't know about evil Jooge's plans to betray the annis hag, or vice versa.

Whenever evil Jooge or the redcap are at work here, 1d4 **xvarts** are also in the area, sweeping up hair and mopping up blood.

In addition to the mess caused by evil Jooge's work, this area is filled with thick strands of black hair. This hair emerges from two hair-choked grills in the floor (both leading to area 4E) and from under the door to area 3G. This is korred hair that has turned evil (see area 4).

Evil Jooge is always excited to work on new clients. Any creatures he captures that have hair are taken to area 3A for a wash and cut, then to areas 3E and 3G for color and pomade, and finally to area 3F for drying. Any captured creatures that are hairless or have shaved heads are taken to area 3C for dental work.

3A. WASHING AND CUTTING STATION

Clients' hair is washed in a cold flow of water from the side channel linking areas 2A and 2B. The water is sluiced through a brass hatch that can be opened and closed as an action from this room, or from the channel (see area 2A). Hundreds of brushes, combs, containers of shaving cream, scissors, clippers, razors, and other haircutting and styling implements hang on the walls—alongside shortswords, daggers, hacksaws, and even more dire tools.

Evil Jooge experiments with a variety of different hairstyles. Roll a d3 to determine how many different styles he is inspired to give to a particular client, then roll a d20 and determine each style by consulting the Random Haircuts table. If a client's hair is too short for the haircut evil Jooge wants to give, he either decides to do dental work instead, or he gives the client the ultimate wig (see area 3D).

Evil Comb. Evil Jooge has made his own *evil comb*, in imitation of the larger version owned by the annis hag. When this magic item is used to comb a creature's hair, that hair comes to life and becomes a neutral evil fey creature. Evil hair doesn't have enough intelligence to pretend to be ordinary hair in order to ambush prey. As such, it typically causes

RANDOM HAIRCUTS

d20	Hairstyle
1	Pigtails
2	Buns <i>or</i> bob
3	Braid <i>or</i> ponytail
4	Shaved (usually with symbol or message on the back of the head)
5	Pixie cut <i>or</i> Caesar cut
6	Mohawk <i>or</i> hawkmo
7	Tonsure
8	Cornrows
9	Long and wavy
10	Long ringlets <i>or</i> dreadlocks
11	Crew cut <i>or</i> ivy league
12	Emo <i>or</i> eraserhead
13	Bowl cut <i>or</i> topknot
14	Bouffant <i>or</i> rockabilly
15	Eighteenth-century French women's hairstyle (giant bun shaped like flowers, sailing ships, or other objects)
16	Spikes
17	Medieval European women's hairstyle (pulled back in a net, snood, or balzo)
18	Moptop
19	Beehive <i>or</i> bowl cut
20	Mullet <i>or</i> curly

constant trouble for its bearer. The evil hair is always under the control of the DM, not its bearer. The abilities and combat strength of evil hair depend on its length:

- **Short Cut (Ear Length or Less):** The evil hair is only a nuisance. At a time of your choice, the hair blindfolds or tickles its bearer, imposing disadvantage on a d20 roll. Once the hair does so, it cannot do so again until the character completes a short or long rest. The hair has 4 hit points and Strength 6.
- **Long Cut (Shoulder Length):** Once per round during combat or some other stressful situation, the hair can blindfold or tickle its bearer (as above), or it can attack its bearer: +5 to hit, 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage. The hair has 8 hit points and Strength 12.
- **Very Long Cut (Small of Back or Longer):** Once per round during combat or some other stressful situation, the hair can pick up or manipulate an object, blindfold or tickle its bearer (as above), or attack its bearer or another creature within 5 feet of the bearer: +5 to hit, 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, or the damage of a weapon the hair is holding. The hair has 8 hit points and Strength 14.

Regardless of its length, evil hair has AC 12, Dexterity 14, Constitution 10, Intelligence 6, Wisdom 10, Charisma 10, and resistance to all damage except slashing damage and fire damage. Attacks that miss the evil hair might hit the hair's bearer, at your

determination. The hair remains evil until 1 week passes, until it is treated with *Knygathin's capable conditioner* (see area 3G), or until the bearer is targeted by a *dispel magic* or *remove curse* spell.

3B. ROT GRUB PIT

Evil Jooge has been experimenting with an alternative to leeching, but it hasn't gone well. This 20-foot-deep pit contains a **swarm of rot grubs**. In the event of a fight in area 3, the xvarts open the brass trapdoor and attempt to push adventurers into the pit.

3C. DENTAL STATION

This area contains a lantern, as well as numerous pinchers, clamps, drills, awls, and other implements of dentistry. Evil Jooge's redcap assistant colors its cap with the bowls of blood that lie scattered around this area.

Evil Jooge is an expert dentist. On a typical patient, he replaces 1d8 troublesome teeth with a selection of gold, silver, and porcelain prosthetics. He is also capable of replacing adventurers' teeth with monster teeth, or with special iron teeth that allow the annis hag to eavesdrop on the characters.

Mask of Laughing. Evil Jooge is assisted in his work by a magic mask whose wearer suffers the effect of the *Tasha's hideous laughter* spell (save DC 14). Slipping the mask over the head of a restrained victim prevents that victim from fighting back while evil Jooge works.

Monster Teeth. The dental station features an impressive selection of teeth from orcs, sharks, ogres, and other monstrous creatures. When implanted in a humanoid creature, these monster teeth grant that creature a bite attack that uses the creature's Strength modifier for the attack roll and deals damage equal to 1d4 plus Strength modifier. The humanoid creature is proficient with this bite attack, which it can use in the same manner as any other melee attack. Additionally, the creature's frightening appearance might impose disadvantage during social interactions or grant advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks, at your determination.

Drill of the Slender Willow. This small, crank-operated power drill was invented by evil Jooge using gnomish technology. If used in combat, the drill is treated as a simple finesse weapon that deals 1d8 piercing damage. However, for each round it is used as a weapon after the first, there is a 10 percent cumulative chance that the device explodes, dealing 3 (1d6) piercing damage to the wielder and causing the drill bit to shoot out toward a random target within 30 feet. That target must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Drill of the Mighty Oak. This crank-operated jackhammer was invented by evil Jooge using gnomish technology. If used in combat, the drill is treated as a simple two-handed weapon that deals 2d8 piercing damage. However, for each round it is used as a weapon after the first, there is a 10 percent cumulative chance that the device explodes, dealing 11 (2d10) piercing damage to the wielder and all other creatures within 10 feet.

3D. HEAD COLLECTION

The severed heads of some of the many clients who displeased evil Jooge hang in this area, varnished and preserved. Evil Jooge periodically tests hairstyles on these horrid mannequins—including two of the heads that wear Jooge's ultimate wigs.

The Ultimate Wig. When faced with a hairless pate that he cannot style, evil Jooge has been experimenting with what he calls the ultimate wig—which is actually a **mimic** (see the *Monster Manual*). Using his advanced hairdressing skills, evil Jooge can pacify the mimic and direct it to take the undetectable form of any hairstyle he chooses. Unfortunately, he has not figured out how to pacify it permanently, so that the creature comes to life after 1d20 hours, then flows over its wearer in an attempt to eat it. When a mimic wakes in this way, it makes a free attack against its wearer before initiative is rolled, and has advantage on the attack roll.

Unless evil Jooge places one of his ultimate wigs onto a character, the mimics won't attack unless they are attacked first.

3E. COLOR AND DYE ROOM

A wooden door separates this room from the main part of area 3. This area is lit by candles, and contains hundreds of hair dyes, many of them rare and exotic—including Jooge's flail snail dye. Three imprisoned **grungs** (one green, one blue, and one purple) hang in cages here, bought from an exotic merchant caravan. Evil Jooge scrapes the grungs' skin to produce brilliant green, blue, and purple dye. The grungs do not speak Common, but they bellow and chirr if they see anyone who might rescue them. If freed by the characters, the grungs attack any nearby opponents of the party for 1 round, then flee without thanking their rescuers.

Most of the hair dyes stored here are ordinary (albeit high quality), but a few have special effects. Additionally, evil Jooge's notebook of experiments can be found here. Among other things, it describes his attempts to create the world's purest colors using a magical machine of his own invention, which is kept in the lowest level of the dungeon. This *Prismatic*

Coloring Machine (see area 4H) is described in only vague terms.

Green Grung Dye (4 Doses). The labels on these bottles of magical green dye read: "LIFT." When applied to a creature's hair, that hair turns brilliant green—as do the creature's feet and hands. While affected by the dye, the creature acts as though under the effect of a *jump* spell and a *spider climb* spell. However, each time the creature makes use of either magical effect as part of its movement, it takes 2 (1d4) acid damage.

The effects of green grung dye last for 7 days or until the adventurer's hair is washed.

Blue Grung Dye (3 Doses). The labels on these bottles of magical blue dye read: "LOUD." When applied to a creature's hair, that hair turns bright blue and becomes incredibly loud, magically generating intense rustling and crackling sounds each time the creature moves. The creature automatically fails Dexterity (Stealth) checks if another creature might hear it, and it has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks involving hearing.

As a bonus action, the creature can shake its hair to cast *thunderwave* (no components required). If the creature's hair is exceptionally long, the damage from this effect might rise to 3d8 or even 4d8, at your determination. A creature that uses this feature is deafened for one hour afterward. Once the creature uses this feature, it cannot do so again until it finishes a short or long rest.

The effects of blue grung dye last for 7 days or until the adventurer's hair is washed.

Purple Grung Dye (4 Doses). The labels on these bottles of magical purple dye read: "LUSH." When applied to a creature's hair, that hair turns vivid purple and becomes soaking wet, dripping a steady trickle of water. Nothing can dry the creature's hair, whose excess water leaves a purple stain on clothing, cloaks, furniture, and anything else the creature comes into contact with for an extended period.

If the creature wrings out its hair, it produces water and effects in a similar manner to a *decanter of endless water* (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). The strength of the effect depends on the length of the adventurer's hair:

- **Short (Ear Length or Less):** A stream of 1 gallon of water
- **Long (Shoulder Length):** A fountain of 5 gallons of water
- **Very long (Small of Back or Longer):** A geyser of 30 gallons of water, 30 feet long and 1 foot wide

Once the creature makes use of this effect, it cannot do so again until it completes a long rest.

The effects of purple grung dye last for 7 days and can't be washed out.

Invisible Dye (4 Doses). These bottles appear to be empty, as the magical dye they hold is invisible. If applied to a creature's hair, that hair becomes permanently invisible. The dye has no effect on skin or other physical features. New hair is visible as it grows out.

Color Remover (5 Doses). These vials hold magical acid that can be splashed onto a creature or thrown (see "Equipment" in the *Player's Handbook*). If applied to a creature's hair, this color remover deals 9 (2d8) acid damage to the creature and burns its hair off down to the skin—but washes out any dye as it does.

3F. BLOW-DRYER

This magical furnace with a hose attached can be locked over the head of a willing—or unwilling—client, blasting out incredible heat. It has four settings, from weakest to strongest.

- **Dry:** This setting dries the client's hair.
- **Wipe:** This setting also dries the client's hair, but the client must then succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or fall into a trance that lasts 1d4 hours. When the client wakes up, he or she has forgotten everything that happened during the previous 24 hours. (This is why none of Jooge's victims remember how they got their haircuts.) These lost memories can't be restored.
- **Bake:** This setting is like "Wipe," except that the client also takes 3 (1d6) fire damage and reduces its Wisdom score by 1d6. This reduction can be undone by a *greater restoration* spell or similar magic.
- **Burn:** Flame bursts out of the hose to fill an area 5 feet wide and 10 feet long, blasting the client for 3 rounds. Each round, the client must attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. After using this setting, the blow-dryer needs 10 minutes to recharge.

If a client doesn't respond to "Wipe," evil Jooge tries "Bake." If that doesn't work, he uses "Burn."

A crafty adventurer can detach the hose from the chair with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check, allowing it to be used as a portable flamethrower. Activating the flamethrower is an action. The hose extends 30 feet from the furnace at its maximum length.

3G. OIL AND POMADE ROOM

A wooden door separates this room from the main part of area 3. Lit by candles, this room is filled with shelves containing various types of pomades, gels, hair oils, and thickeners. The floor and ceiling are covered with a vine-like tangle of black hair, including

strands that extend under the door into area 3, and especially around the rough-hewn stone stairs leading to area 4.

If any Small or larger creature of non-evil alignment walks down the stairs toward area 4, the mass of black hair above the entrance drops down and attacks, using the statistics of a **trapper**. Since the hair is korred hair, any parts of it that are severed are transformed into whatever material cut them (most likely steel if the adventurers attack the hair using weapons).

If the characters explore this area, they discover that a number of the pomades are magical.

Knygathin's Capable Conditioner (3 Doses). The label reads "For Unruly Hair." This magical conditioner removes knots and tangles, and it "tames" evil hair such as that created by the *evil comb*. If rubbed into evil hair as an action, the conditioner turns that hair normal. A single dose will also turn a small section of the korred's hair back to normal, effectively killing the trapper in this room (see above), killing the roper in area 2A, or dispelling an *Evard's black tentacles* effect in area 4.

Medusa Oil (1 Dose). The label reads "Snake Oil." If applied to hair after regular washing over a period of 1 week, this magical oil will first turn a creature's hair into snake-shaped braids, then transform it into small snakes like those of a medusa (see the *Monster Manual*). The hair grants the creature the medusa's power of turning those who see it into stone. Unfortunately, the creature isn't immune to this effect, can't control the snakes, and will turn to stone if it catches sight of its reflection in a mirror. This effect is permanent unless subject to the break enchantment effect of a *dispel evil and good* spell, or similar magic.

Permanent Gel (2 Doses). The label reads "Permanent Gel—Lasts Forever!" The *permanent gel* appears to be just an exceptionally strong hair gel. But if a creature using the magical gel has its hair mussed, or if someone tries to restyle it, the *permanent gel* springs the hair back into its original form, resisting any attempt at change. If the creature using the *permanent gel* attempts to cut its hair or vigorously wash the gel out (it resists rain and mundane moisture), that character earns the gel's wrath. After 1 hour, any cut-out or washed-out blobs of gel coagulate and expand into a **slithering tracker** that pursues the creature and leaps upon it to gel its hair once more. If the creature's hair has been cut so as to make its original hairstyle impossible, the slithering tracker attempts to kill the creature. The slithering tracker can be attacked and killed normally while not in the character's hair. The gel can be destroyed by burning off all the character's hair with fire or acid.

THE CAVERNS

The lowest area of the dungeon is a network of damp, rough-hewn caves that reek of wet hair. The caves are completely dark except when evil Jooge comes down with a lantern.

4. XVART CAVERNS

The xvart caverns are filled with thick cords of Bezoar's hair, which has been brought to life and turned evil by the *evil comb*. Any character who watches the hair for more than a moment sees it slowly coiling and squirming. The hair's sentience is too low to let it attack independently outside of areas 2A and 3G. However, if the annis hag, evil Jooge, or any xvart warlock of Raxivort is present, that individual can use a bonus action to command the hair to attack the adventurers. This special hair attack takes the form of an *Evard's black tentacles* spell that doesn't require concentration and lasts 1d6 rounds. Only one set of hair tentacles can be active in the caves at one time. Once the spell effect ends, roll a d6 at the end of each round, with the hair's ability to form tentacles recharging on a roll of 6.

Any hair that takes damage from fire continues to burn slowly. Unless the smoldering hair is extinguished, the smell fills the caverns in 2d6 rounds, putting all the inhabitants on alert.

HAIR CLONES

If the korred's hair is cut, the cut strands transform into whatever material was used to cut it (typically iron or steel if cut with weapons, scissors, and so forth). If the hair is cut by the teeth, nails, or hands of a living creature and the volume of hair cut is roughly equal to the volume of that creature, the hair transforms into a living duplicate of the creature. A hair clone is identical to the original creature in every way, except that it takes on an evil alignment while maintaining the original creature's alignment component on the lawful-chaotic axis. Additionally, only creatures that are challenge rating 1/4 or less and have no class levels can be cloned. If a stronger creature cuts the korred's hair with teeth, nails, or hands, the resulting clone resembles the original creature but has no class levels and a maximum of 8 hit points.

The magic that creates a hair clone can't be undone by anything other than a *wish* spell. This is a special ability unique to Bezoar, whose hair is unusually magical even for a korred.

4A. BOTTOM OF DRAIN

In the wettest part of the caves, a small pool has formed where thick, gloppy masses of hair clog a

brass drain in the ceiling. Mold and fungus grows copiously here.

If the hair clogging the drain is cut with a typical weapon, the strands turn to iron or steel, leaving the drain even more plugged. If the adventurers instead simply pull on the hair, they can easily unclog the drain. (The hair attacks as a roper only from the area 2A side.) In response, a torrent of water pours into the chamber, pushing any adventurers down the tunnel toward area 4B. Each creature in the chamber must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or take 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage and be pushed 10 to 40 feet and knocked prone.

If the drain is cleared, water pours from the river into areas 4A through 4I, flooding the lower caves. Errevastica and the xvarts initially panic in response, but if not distracted, the hag uses a solid wall of korred hair transformed to iron to seal the corridor leading to areas 4A, 4B, and 4C. This means that the real Jooge will drown when the water floods the oubliette where he is held prisoner (area 4C).

4B. OUBLIETTE OF BONES

This foul, 30-foot-deep floor cell was once used to hold prisoners. They have all since been eaten, leaving only bones.

4C. JOOGE'S OUBLIETTE

This 30-foot-deep floor cell contains the real Jooge Nopsmoth (neutral good **commoner** with Charisma 15; see the *Monster Manual*). Jooge is aware of everything that has happened and is horrified. If rescued, his first concern is the well-being of his daughter Mops. His second concern is freeing Bezoar, whom he considers a friend.

4D. GUARD POST

Eight **xvarts** and one **xvart warlock of Raxivort** stand watch here, keeping an eye on the korred in area 4E and inventing new ways to differentiate one another, since most of them are hair clones. If they see intruders, one xvart runs to area 4J to alert Xvartette (the annis hag) while the others attack.

4E. KORRED'S PRISON

Bezoar the **korred** is imprisoned here in an iron cage hanging from the ceiling. His hair has grown wild where it extends out from his head and beard to fill the caverns, as well as growing like roots up the drains leading to area 3.

The korred's physical might is suppressed by his being unable to have his feet on the floor, as well as by innate abjuration magic imbued into the cage by

Errevastica. A *dispel magic* spell cast on the cage, a DC 20 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools, or a solid blow dealing 12 or more damage breaks the cage and frees the korred.

Ill-tempered at the best of times, Bezoar is furious at his imprisonment. He might make promises to the adventurers in return for freeing him (which requires cutting his hair after he has left the cage). But being chaotic neutral, he feels no obligation to keep his word, storming off at the first opportunity. Bezoar hasn't seen the real Jooge since before he was captured, so he thinks Jooge joined forces with the annis hag to betray him. If the adventurers and the real Jooge carefully explain the situation, Bezoar calms down and agrees to help the adventurers defeat the annis hag.

4F. TABAXI OUBLIETTE

This 30-foot-deep floor cell contains Two Llamas Running, a chaotic good tabaxi **swashbuckler** from the faraway land of Maztica. Impressed by her fur, evil Jooge gave her a discount to get her into his shop, but Two Llamas resisted the blow-dryer's memory wiping. Rather than kill her, evil Jooge and the annis took her prisoner, intending to eventually use her body parts for magical reagents or hair products.

If freed by the party, Two Llamas shows her gratitude by helping fight the xvarts. Use the swashbuckler statistics from *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, but Two Llamas also has the following tabaxi traits:

- Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- A climbing speed of 20 feet.
- A claws attack—*Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 3 (1d4 + 1) slashing damage.
- Additional skill modifiers—Perception +2, Stealth +6; passive Perception 12

Two Llamas can use her claws attack as part of her multiattack, but if any of the characters has a spare rapier or dagger, she asks to borrow those weapons to improve her effectiveness in combat.

4G. TEMPLE OF RAXIVORT

Gruesomely decorated with skulls and bones, this room contains the xvarts' sacrificial altar to their evil god and creator, Raxivort. The room is usually inhabited by eight **xvarts** and one **xvart warlock of Raxivort**, who presides over sacrifices made here.

The warlock was the priest-leader of the xvarts before Errevastica came along. Alone among the xvarts, he bears a grudge against the annis hag for winning over the hearts of his comrades and taking them away from the 'correct path' of sacrificing other humanoids and tithing to the high priest. Afraid to

rebel openly, he continues to ritually sacrifice whichever of evil Jooge's unsuccessful clients are not incinerated by the blow-dryer or eaten by the annis hag. In a pouch under his kilt he carries 75 gp, 300 cp, and three rubies worth 150 gp each.

4H. THE PRISMATIC COLORING MACHINE

This massive machine, which pulses visibly and radiates an aura of power, is evil Jooge's greatest invention. It taps into extradimensional forces to reach a dimension of pure color, where hues are the expression of primal forces beyond mortal understanding. The cavern walls around the ominous iron device are streaked with kaleidoscopic patterns and rainbow shades.

It takes two creatures to successfully operate the *Prismatic Coloring Machine*: one to work the controls, and one to sit in the chair and have its hair done. Roll a d8 and determine the result below for the creature in the chair. (If evil Jooge is operating the machine, he can roll twice and use whichever result he wants.) Additionally, if the creature operating the machine is not a trained barber, it must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check or the creature having its hair done has disadvantage on saving throws against the machine's effects.

1—Red. The creature must attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 35 (10d6) fire damage. On a successful save, the creature's hair permanently transforms into fire. The creature gains resistance to fire damage and vulnerability to cold damage, and its fiery, glowing hair imposes permanent disadvantage on its Dexterity (Stealth) checks. Additionally, if the creature's hair is shoulder length or longer, it can use an action to shake its hair and cast *burning hands* (no components required). Once the creature uses this feature, it cannot do so again until it finishes a short rest.

2—Orange. The creature must attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 35 (10d6) acid damage. On a successful save, the creature's hair permanently transforms into an ooze. The creature gains resistance to acid damage. Additionally, if the creature's hair is shoulder length or longer, it can use a bonus action to make a melee attack against a target within 5 feet of it. On a hit, the attack deals 3 (1d6) plus Strength modifier bludgeoning damage and 3 (1d6) acid damage. If the creature's hair reaches the small of its back or is longer, this damage increases to 7 (2d6) plus Strength modifier bludgeoning damage and 7 (2d6) acid damage.

The ooze hair is partly self-willed, and it might eat small organic objects—or creatures—that it can reach while its host is sleeping. Additionally, if the

host creature dies, its consciousness enters the ooze hair. If the creature's body is not destroyed, the creature reincarnates 24 hours later as a **gelatinous cube** or **ochre jelly** (creature's choice; see the *Monster Manual* for both creatures). The reincarnated ooze has the original creature's memories, as well as its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores.

3—Yellow. The creature must attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 35 (10d6) lightning damage. On a successful save, the creature's hair permanently transforms into a mass of electricity. The creature gains resistance to lightning damage, but its glowing, sparking hair imposes permanent disadvantage on its Dexterity (Stealth) checks. Additionally, the creature can use an action to shake its hair and cast *shocking grasp* (no components required). Once the creature uses this feature, it can't do so again until it finishes a short rest.

If the creature's hair reaches the small of its back or is longer, it can instead use an action to cast *lightning bolt* (no components required). Once the creature uses this feature, it can't do so again until it finishes a long rest.

4—Green. The creature must attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 35 (10d6) poison damage. On a successful save, the creature's skin turns green and scaly as it transforms permanently into a yuan-ti of your choice (typically a **yuan-ti pureblood**; see the *Monster Manual*). If this transformation is imposed on a character, he or she must also succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become permanently neutral evil.

5—Blue. The creature must attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 35 (10d6) cold damage. On a successful save, the creature's hair permanently transforms into a mass of translucent ice crystals that are freezing cold to the touch. The creature gains resistance to cold damage. Additionally, if the creature's hair is shoulder length or longer, it can use an action to shake its hair and cast *ice knife* (no components required; see the *Elemental Evil Player's Companion*). Once the creature uses this feature, it cannot do so again until it finishes a short rest.

If the creature's hair reaches the small of its back or is longer, it can instead use an action to cast *Snilloc's snowball swarm* (no components required; see the *Elemental Evil Player's Companion*). Once the creature uses this feature, it can't do so again until it finishes a long rest.

6—Indigo. The creature must attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it turns to stone and is permanently petrified. Whether or not the creature turns to stone, its hair is transformed into a mass of glittering gems. This gem hair retains the flexibility and softness of normal hair until it is

cut, at which point it hardens. If all the creature's hair is cut, the resulting gems are worth $1d6 \times 100$ gp for short hair; $1d6 \times 500$ gp for shoulder-length hair; or $1d6 \times 1,000$ gp for hair that extends to the small of its back or is longer. If the creature is not petrified (or if it is returned to normal with *greater restoration* or similar magic), its new hair grows back in as gems, allowing it to be repeatedly cut and sold at a frequency determined by the DM.

7—Violet. The creature must attempt a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it is permanently blinded. Whether or not the creature is blinded, its hair becomes a gateway to another plane of existence (the DM determines which plane). The size of the gateway, and what can fit through it, depends on the style and length of the creature's hair. Strange monsters might emerge through the creature's hair, and the creature and its allies might be able to enter the hair gate to explore the other plane.

8—Special. The target is hit by two colors. Roll twice more, rerolling any result of 8.

Undoing Effects. The effects imposed by the *Prismatic Coloring Machine* can be undone only by a *wish* spell (though creatures blinded or petrified by the machine can have those conditions removed by *lesser restoration* and *greater restoration*, as normal). With the exception of creatures affected by the machine's indigo setting, any affected creature that removes its hair by cutting, fire, acid, or any other means remains under the effects imposed by the machine.

The *Prismatic Coloring Machine* is unstable. Each time it is used within a 24-hour period, there's a 10 percent cumulative chance that it explodes, hitting every creature within 60 feet of it with the effect of a *prismatic spray* spell.

4I. ABJURER OUBLIETTE

This 30-foot-deep floor cell contains Bernadette, a neutral **abjurer** and member of the Arcane Brotherhood—the legendary mage's order of Luskan. Bernadette was captured by evil Jooge while getting her hair curled, and it was from her that evil Jooge learned the magic secrets he used to build the *Prismatic Coloring Machine*. Bernadette promises to reward any adventurers who free her from the pit, and she makes good on her word (see "Concluding the Adventure"). Although still able to cast cantrips, she has been unable to escape the pit without her spellbook, which is held by the hag in area 4J.

4J. XVARTS' LAIR

This huge cave filled with hair, filth, and rats, is home to forty-five **xvarts**, two **xvart warlocks of Raxivort**,

and Errevastica the **annis hag**. Errevastica is never in her true form, instead maintaining the illusion of being Xvartette, a 10-foot-tall, purple-skinned, female xvart of rare beauty (at least as far as the other xvarts are concerned). The hag always holds the *evil comb*, which she uses to groom Bezoar's ever-growing hair.

The xvarts are infatuated with the annis hag and do her bidding without question, even overcoming their usual fear of larger humanoids in their zeal to impress her. Using the korred's hair to generate more of themselves, they hope eventually to create an army (led by Xvartette) capable of conquering all other races. They have no idea of the annis hag's true form, and would likely flee in panic if they saw it—as happens if Errevastica reverts to her true form after being killed in combat.

Errevastica looks forward to seeing evil spread in Silverymoon—and to feast on the citizens and children of the city. Her xvarts have so far been engaging only in acts of stealthy robbery aboveground, but when her army is large enough, she plans to send it forth to engage in ever-greater acts of malice and murder. She encourages evil Jooge's experiments but keeps one eye on him, wary that he might become too powerful.

Evil Comb. The original full-sized version of the *evil comb* requires two hands for a Medium humanoid to hold. It has the same magical effects as the smaller *evil comb* that evil Jooge created (see area 3A), but it can also be used as a two-handed magic melee weapon with a +1 bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls. Attacks with the comb deal 6 ($2d4 + 1$) plus Strength modifier piercing damage, or 11 ($4d4 + 1$) plus Strength modifier piercing damage to any creature with hair that is shoulder length or longer.

TREASURE

Beneath a pile of rags, humanoid bones, and shampoo-slime behind Errevastica's throne is the treasure that has been offered up to the annis hag by the xvarts: 1,325 gp, 2,500 sp, 625 cp, a golden spindle worth 150 gp, a *potion of resistance (poison)*, a *potion of fire breath*, a *spell scroll of cure wounds*, assorted small pieces of jewelry worth a total of 750 gp, and Bernadette's spellbook (see area 4I).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If Errevastica is killed, she reverts to her normal form. This causes any surviving xvarts to panic, breaking off from combat and fleeing the dungeon. Reports are heard across Silverymoon of xvarts bolting into the wilderness, but the survivors are never seen again.

With the threat of the annis hag ended, the characters earn the gratitude of the folk of Silverymoon, the eternal friendship of Jooge and Mops, and free haircuts for life. Local authorities take

responsibility for cleaning out and sanctifying the cellars and caverns beneath Jooge's house, which are then sealed off.

Bernadette arranges for the *Prismatic Coloring Machine* to be safely neutralized and taken away by operatives of the Arcane Brotherhood, and has a reward of 100 gp per character sent to the adventurers within the next month for saving her. (If Bernadette did not survive, mages from the Arcane Brotherhood travel to Silvermoon to collect her body and neutralize the *Prismatic Coloring Machine* if they are notified of her death.)

If good Jooge survives the adventure, the original Jooge insists on taking his clone in to live with him and Mops, with the two treating each other as brothers. With two talented barbers working the shop, both Jooges are finally able to get their collective finances in order.

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Unearthed Arcana: Warlock and Wizard

Mike Mearls and Jeremy Crawford conjure new options for the warlock and wizard



This document introduces playtest options for two classes, the warlock and the wizard.

Playtest Material

The material here is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not fully tempered by design iterations. They are not officially part of the game. For these reasons, material in this column is not legal in D&D Adventurers League events.

Otherworldly Patrons

At 1st level, a warlock gains the Otherworldly Patron feature. Here

are new playtest options for that feature: the Hexblade and the Raven Queen.

The Hexblade

You have made your pact with a powerful, sentient magic weapon carved from the stuff of the Shadowfell. The mighty sword *Blackrazor* is the most notable of these weapons, several of which have spread across the multiverse over the ages. These weapons grow stronger as they consume the life essence of their victims. The strongest of them can use their ties to the Shadowfell to offer power to mortals who serve them. The Raven Queen forged the first of these weapons. They, along with the hexblade warlocks, are another tool she can use to manipulate events in the Material Plane to her inscrutable ends.

Expanded Spell List

The Hexblade lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

Spell Level Spells

1st	<i>shield, wrathful smite</i>
2nd	<i>branding smite, magic weapon</i>
3rd	<i>blink, elemental weapon</i>
4th	<i>phantasmal killer, staggering smite</i>
5th	<i>cone of cold, destructive wave</i>

Hex Warrior

At 1st level, you gain proficiency with medium armor, shields, and martial weapons. In addition, when attacking with a melee weapon that you are proficient with and that lacks the two-handed property, you can use your Charisma modifier, instead of Strength or Dexterity, for the attack and damage rolls.

Hexblade's Curse

Starting at 1st level, you gain the ability to place a baleful curse on an enemy. As a bonus action, choose one creature you can see within 30 feet of you. The target is cursed for 1 minute. Until the curse ends, you gain the following benefits:

You gain a bonus to damage rolls against the cursed target. The bonus equals your proficiency bonus.

- Any attack roll you make against the cursed target is a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 on the d20.
- If the cursed target dies, you regain hit points equal to your warlock level + your Charisma modifier.
- You can't use this feature again until you finish a short or long rest.

Shadow Hound

Starting at 6th level, your shadow can split from you and transform into a hound of pure darkness. Most of the time, your shadow hound masquerades as your normal shadow. As a bonus action, you can command it to magically slip into the shadow of a creature you can see within 60 feet of you. While the shadow hound is merged in this manner, the target can't gain the benefits of half cover or three-quarters cover against your attack rolls, and you know the distance and direction to the target even if it is hidden. The hound can't be seen by anyone but you and those with truesight, and it is unaffected by light. The target has a vague feeling of dread while the hound is present.

As a bonus action, you can command your shadow hound to return to you. It also automatically returns to you if you and the target are on different planes of existence, if you're incapacitated, or if *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, or similar magic is used on the target.

Armor of Hexes

At 10th level, your hex grows more powerful. If the target cursed by your Hexblade's Curse hits you with an attack roll, roll a d6. On a 4 or higher, the attack instead misses you.

Master of Hexes

Starting at 14th level, you can use your Hexblade's Curse again without resting, but when you apply it to a new target, the curse immediately ends on the previous target.

The Raven Queen

Your patron is the Raven Queen, a mysterious being who rules the Shadowfell from a palace of ice deep within that dread realm. The Raven Queen watches over the world, anticipating each creature's

death and ensuring that it meets its end at the proscribed time and place. As the ruler of the Shadowfell, she dwells in a decayed, dark reflection of the world. Her ability to reach into the world is limited. Thus, she turns to mortal warlocks to serve her will. Warlocks sworn to the Raven Queen receive visions and whispers from her in their dreams, sending them on quests and warning them of impending dangers.

The Raven Queen's followers are expected to serve her will in the world. She concerns herself with ensuring that those fated to die pass from the world as expected, and bids her agents to defeat those who seek to cheat death through undeath or other imitations of immortality. She hates intelligent undead and expects her followers to strike them down, whereas mindless undead such as skeletons and zombies are little more than stumbling automatons in her eyes.

Expanded Spell List

The Raven Queen lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

Raven Queen Expanded Spells

Spell Level Spells

1st	<i>false life, sanctuary</i>
2nd	<i>silence, spiritual weapon</i>
3rd	<i>feign death, speak with dead</i>
4th	<i>ice storm, locate creature</i>
5th	<i>commune, cone of cold</i>

Sentinel Raven

Starting at 1st level, you gain the service of a spirit sent by the Raven Queen to watch over you. The spirit assumes the form and game statistics of a raven, and it always obeys your commands, which you can give telepathically while it is within 100 feet of you.

While the raven is perched on your shoulder, you gain darkvision with a range of 30 feet and a bonus to your passive Wisdom (Perception) score and to Wisdom (Perception) checks. The bonus

equals your Charisma modifier. While perched on your shoulder, the raven can't be targeted by any attack or other harmful effect; only you can cast spells on it; it can't take damage; and it is incapacitated.

You can see through the raven's eyes and hear what it hears while it is within 100 feet of you.

In combat, you roll initiative for the raven and control how it acts. If it is slain by a creature, you gain advantage on all attack rolls against the killer for the next 24 hours.

The raven doesn't require sleep. While it is within 100 feet of you, it can awaken you from sleep as a bonus action.

The raven vanishes when it dies, if you die, or if the two of you are separated by more than 5 miles.

At the end of a short or long rest, you can call the raven back to you—no matter where it is or whether it died—and it reappears within 5 feet of you.

Soul of the Raven

At 6th level, you gain the ability to merge with your raven spirit. As a bonus action when your raven is perched on your shoulder, your body merges with your raven's form. While merged, you become Tiny, you replace your speed with the raven's, and you can use your action only to Dash, Disengage, Dodge, Help, Hide, or Search. During this time, you gain the benefits of your raven being perched on your shoulder. As an action, you and the raven return to normal.

Raven's Shield

At 10th level, the Raven Queen grants you a protective blessing. You gain advantage on death saving throws, immunity to the frightened condition, and resistance to necrotic damage.

Queen's Right Hand

Starting at 14th level, you can channel the Raven Queen's power to slay a creature. You can cast *finger of death*. After you cast the spell with this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

Eldritch Invocations

At 2nd level, a warlock gains the Eldritch Invocations feature. Here

are new playtest options for that feature.

Many of these new invocations are tied to a patron, allowing you to strengthen the bond between your warlock and an otherworldly patron.

Two of the invocations are associated with the Seeker, a patron that appeared in another installment of Unearthed Arcana.

Aspect of the Moon

Prerequisite: The Archfey patron

You have gained the Maiden of the Moon's favor. You no longer need to sleep and can't be forced to sleep by any means. To gain the benefits of a long rest, you can spend all 8 hours doing light activity, such as reading and keeping watch.

Burning Hex

Prerequisite: The Hexblade patron

As a bonus action, you cause a target cursed by your Hexblade's Curse to take fire damage equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of 1).

Caiphon's Beacon

Prerequisite: The Great Old One patron

The purple star Caiphon is the doom of inexperienced mariners. Those who use its deceptive light to guide their travels invariably come to ruin. You gain proficiency in the Deception and Stealth skills, and you have advantage on attack rolls against charmed creatures.

Chilling Hex

Prerequisite: The Hexblade patron

As a bonus action, you cause frost to swirl around a target cursed by your Hexblade's Curse, dealing cold damage to each of your enemies within 5 feet of the target. The cold damage equals your Charisma modifier (minimum of 1).

Chronicle of the Raven Queen

Prerequisite: Raven Queen patron, Pact of the Tome feature

You can place a corpse's hand or similar appendage on your Book of Shadows and ask one question aloud. After 1 minute, the answer appears written in blood in your book. The answer is provided by the dead creature's spirit to the best of its knowledge and is translated into a language of your choice. You must use this ability within 1 minute of a creature's death, and a given creature can only be asked one question in this manner.

Claw of Acamar

Prerequisite: The Great Old One patron, Pact of the Blade feature

You can create a black, lead flail using your Pact of the Blade feature. The flail's head is sculpted to resemble a pair of grasping tentacles. The weapon has the reach property. When you hit a creature with it, you can expend a spell slot to deal an additional 2d8 necrotic damage to the target per spell level, and you can reduce the creature's speed to 0 feet until the end of your next turn.

Cloak of Baalzebul

Prerequisite: The Fiend patron

As a bonus action, you can conjure a swarm of buzzing flies around you. The swarm grants you advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks but disadvantage on all other Charisma checks. In addition, a creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of you takes poison damage equal to your Charisma modifier. You can dismiss the swarm with another bonus action.

Curse Bringer

Prerequisite: The Hexblade patron, Pact of the Blade feature

You can create a greatsword forged from silver, with black runes etched into its blade, using your Pact of the Blade feature. If you reduce a target cursed by your Hexblade's Curse to 0 hit points with this sword, you can immediately change the target of the curse to a different creature. This change doesn't extend the curse's duration.

When you hit a creature with this weapon, you can expend a spell slot to deal an additional 2d8 slashing damage to the target per spell level, and you can reduce the creature's speed to 0 feet until the end of your next turn.

Kiss of Mephistopheles

Prerequisite: 5th level, the Fiend patron, eldritch blast cantrip

You can channel the fires of Mephistopheles through your *eldritch blast*. When you hit a creature with that cantrip, you can cast *fireball* as a bonus action using a warlock spell slot.

However, the spell must be centered on a creature you hit with *eldritch blast*.

Frost Lance

Prerequisite: The Archfey patron, eldritch blast cantrip

You draw on the gifts of the Prince of Frost to trap your enemies in ice. When you hit a creature with your *eldritch blast* cantrip one or more times on your turn, you can reduce that creature's speed by 10 feet until the end of your next turn.

Gaze of Khirad

Prerequisite: 7th level, the Great Old One patron

You gain the piercing gaze of the blue star Khirad. As an action, you can see through solid objects to a range of 30 feet until the end of the current turn. During that time, you perceive objects as ghostly, transparent images.

Grasp of Hadar

Prerequisite: The Great Old One patron, eldritch blast cantrip

Once during your turn when you hit a creature with your *eldritch blast* cantrip, you can move that creature in a straight line 10 feet closer to yourself.

Green Lord's Gift

Prerequisite: The Archfey patron

The Green Lord oversees a verdant realm of everlasting summer. Your soul is linked to his power. Whenever you regain hit points, you treat any dice rolled to determine the hit points you regain as having rolled their maximum value.

Improved Pact Weapon

Prerequisite: 5th level, Pact of the Blade feature

Any weapon you create using your Pact of the Blade feature is a *+1 weapon*. This invocation doesn't affect a magic weapon you transformed into your pact weapon.

Mace of Dispater

Prerequisite: The Fiend patron, Pact of the Blade feature

When you create your pact weapon as a mace, it manifests as an iron mace forged in Dis, the second of the Nine Hells. When you hit a creature with it, you can expend a spell slot to deal an additional 2d8 force damage to the target per spell level, and you can knock the target prone if it is Huge or smaller.

Moon Bow

Prerequisite: The Archfey patron, Pact of the Blade feature

You can create a longbow using your Pact of the Blade feature. When you draw back its string and fire, it creates an arrow of white wood, which vanishes after 1 minute. You have advantage on attack rolls against lycanthropes with the bow. When you hit a creature with it, you can expend a spell slot to deal an additional 2d8 radiant damage to the target per spell level.

Path of the Seeker

Prerequisite: The Seeker patron

The Seeker bids you to travel in search of knowledge, and little can prevent you from walking this path. You ignore difficult terrain, have advantage on all checks to escape a grapple, manacles, or rope bindings, and advantage on saving throws against being paralyzed.

Raven Queen's Blessing

Prerequisite: Raven Queen patron, eldritch blast cantrip

When you score a critical hit with your *eldritch blast* cantrip, pick yourself or an ally you can see within 30 feet of you. The chosen creature can immediately expend a Hit Die to regain hit points equal to the roll + the creature's Constitution modifier (minimum of 1 hit point).

Relentless Hex

Prerequisite: 5th level, the Hexblade patron

Your Hexblade's Curse creates a temporary bond between you and your target. As a bonus action, you can magically teleport to a space you can see within 5 feet of the target cursed by your Hexblade's Curse. To do so, you must be able to see the target and must be within 30 feet of it.

Sea Twins' Gift

Prerequisite: The Archfey patron

The Sea Twins rule seas in the Feywild. Their gift allows you to travel through water with ease.

You can breathe underwater, and you gain a swimming speed equal to your walking speed.

You can also cast *water breathing* using a warlock spell slot. Once you cast it using this invocation, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

Seeker's Speech

Prerequisite: The Seeker patron

Your quest for knowledge allows you to master any spoken language. When you complete a long rest, you can pick two languages. You gain the ability to speak, read, and write the chosen languages until you finish your next long rest.

Shroud of Ulban

Prerequisite: 18th level, the Great Old One patron

The blue-white star Ulban maintains a fickle presence among the stars, fluttering into view only to herald a dire omen. As an action, you can turn invisible for 1 minute. If you attack, deal damage, or force a creature to make a saving throw, you become visible at the end of the current turn.

Superior Pact Weapon

Prerequisite: 9th level, Pact of the Blade feature

Any weapon you create using your Pact of the Blade feature is a +2 *weapon*. This invocation doesn't affect a magic weapon you transformed into your pact weapon.

Tomb of Levistus

Prerequisite: The Fiend patron

As a reaction when you take damage, you can entomb yourself in ice, which melts away at the end of your next turn. You gain 10 temporary hit points per warlock level, which take as much of the triggering damage as possible. You also gain vulnerability to fire damage, your speed drops to 0, and you are incapacitated. All of these effects end when the ice melts.

Once you use this invocation, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

Ultimate Pact Weapon

Prerequisite: 15th level, Pact of the Blade feature

Any weapon you create using your Pact of the Blade feature is a +3 *weapon*. This invocation doesn't affect a magic weapon you transformed into your pact weapon.

Arcane Tradition

At 2nd level, a wizard gains the Arcane Tradition feature. Here is a new playtest option for that feature: Lore Mastery.

Lore Mastery

Lore Mastery is an arcane tradition fixated on understanding the underlying mechanics of magic. It is the most academic of all arcane traditions. The promise of uncovering new knowledge or proving (or discrediting) a theory of magic is usually required to rouse its practitioners from their laboratories, academies, and archives to pursue a life of adventure. Known as savants, followers of this tradition are a bookish lot who see beauty and mystery in the application of magic. The results of a spell are less interesting to them than the process that creates it. Some savants take a haughty attitude toward those who follow a tradition focused on a single school of magic, seeing them as provincial and lacking the sophistication needed to master true magic. Other savants are generous teachers, countering ignorance and deception with deep knowledge and good humor.

Lore Master

Starting at 2nd level, you become a compendium of knowledge on a vast array of topics. Your proficiency bonus is doubled for any ability check you make that uses the Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion skill if you are proficient in that skill.

In addition, your analytical abilities are so well-honed that your initiative in combat can be driven by mental agility, rather than physical agility. When you roll initiative, it is either an Intelligence check or a Dexterity check for you (your choice).

Spell Secrets

At 2nd level, you master the first in a series of arcane secrets uncovered by your extensive studies.

When you cast a spell with a spell slot and the spell deals acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, radiant, or thunder damage, you can substitute that damage type with one other type from that list (you can change only one damage type per casting of a spell). You replace one energy type for another by altering the spell's formula as you cast it.

When you cast a spell with a spell slot and the spell requires a saving throw, you can change the saving throw from one ability score to another of your choice. Once you change a saving throw in this way, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

Altering Spells

While the Spell Secrets feature offers increased versatility, at the table its effects can be difficult to spot by the other players. If you're playing a savant, take a moment to describe how you alter your spells. Think of a signature change your character is particularly proud of. Be inventive, and make the game more fun for everyone by playing up the sudden, unexpected tricks your character can employ. For example, a *fireball* transformed to require a Strength save might become a sphere of burning rock that shatters and slams into its target. A *charm person* that requires a Constitution save might take the form of a vaporous narcotic that alters the target's mood.

Alchemical Casting

At 6th level, you learn to augment spells in a variety of ways. When you cast a spell with a spell slot, you can expend one additional spell slot to augment its effects for this casting, mixing the raw stuff of magic into your spell to amplify it. The effect depends on the spell slot you expend.

An additional **1st-level spell slot** can increase the spell's raw force. If you roll damage for the spell when you cast it, increase the damage against every target by 2d10 force damage. If the spell can deal damage on more than one turn, it deals this extra force damage only on the turn you cast the spell.

An additional **2nd-level spell slot** can increase the spell's range. If the spell's range is at least 30 feet, it becomes 1 mile.

An additional **3rd-level spell slot** can increase the spell's potency. Increase the spell's save DC by 2.

Prodigious Memory

At 10th level, you have attained a greater mastery of spell preparation. As a bonus action, you can replace one spell you have prepared with another spell from your spellbook. You can't use this feature again until you finish a short or long rest.

Master of Magic

At 14th level, your knowledge of magic allows you to duplicate almost any spell. As a bonus action, you can call to mind the ability to cast one spell of your choice from any class's spell list. The spell must be of a level for which you have spell slots, you mustn't have it prepared, and you follow the normal rules for casting it, including expending a spell slot. If the spell isn't a wizard spell, it counts as a wizard spell when you cast it. The ability to cast the spell vanishes from your mind when you cast it or when the current turn ends.

You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

If you'd like to read more class-based specials from Unearthed Arcana, then be sure to check out our recent [Sorcerer](#), [Ranger & Rogue](#), and [Artificer](#) features.

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Dragon Magazine Throwback: Dragotha

From the *Dragon* archives, we revisit a famed undead dragon

When crafting D&D adventures, inspiration can be drawn from a vast variety of sources (even sometimes from **entirely different games**). Players and DMs who know Lawrence Schick's classic AD&D adventure *White Plume Mountain* know that one of its most inspirational features was the area map by illustrator Erol Otus—both for what it showed (the mountain itself) and for the wider range of locations and challenges it referenced.

In this issue's **preview of *Tales from the Yawning Portal***, you can get a look at the latest version of that map, showing White Plume Mountain and its mysterious environs: the hut of Thingizzard, Dead Gnoll's Eye Socket, the Twisted Thickets, the cursed ruins of Castle Mukos, and, of course, the lair of Dragotha the undead dragon, where

fabulous riches and hideous death await. When *White Plume Mountain* was first released, those map references described locations and threats not found in the adventure—inspiring countless DMs to develop those threats for their own campaigns, long before the release of any official material supporting them.

DRAGOTHA

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Last issue, we looked back at [Great Stoney](#) as a retrospective from the early years of *Dragon* magazine (and we look forward to seeing the results of more readers' assembly of that paper craft castle). This issue, we look back at the first official material presented for Dragotha the undead dragon, penned by William Simpson and illustrated by Clyde Caldwell in *Dragon* 134. As the article notes, that singular threatening map reference from the original adventure “was all there was in all of the AD&D game literature about Dragotha—until now.”

Simpson's Dragotha was designed for first edition AD&D, but players wanting a more modern take can pair the article up with the dracolich template from the *Monster Manual*. And as for Thingizzard's hut, Castle Mukos, and the other locales noted on the original map, feel free to let those references inspire wholly original locations in your own games!

In coming issues of *Dragon+*, we'll continue to look back into the vast trove of *Dragon* magazine back issues to present some favorite pieces from years past. Though the rules and editions of D&D have changed over the years, there's still much to be savored from nearly four decades of *Dragon*. If there are particular articles or content that you would like to see republished in a future issue of *Dragon+*, please [let us know!](#)

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by William Simpson

Lords & Legends

Fabulous riches and hideous death

In the AD&D® module S2 *White Plume Mountain* (later incorporated into S1-4 *Realms of Horror*) is a map showing the environs around that fabled dungeon. Northwest of White Plume Mountain on that map is a passage that reads:

**“BEYOND TO THE LAIR OF DRAGOTHA,
THE UNDEAD DRAGON,
WHERE FABULOUS RICHES AND HIDEOUS DEATH AWAIT.”**

And that was all there was in all of the AD&D game literature about Dragotha — until now.

DRAGOTHA

FREQUENCY: *Unique*
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: -3
MOVE: 12"/24" (MC: E)
HIT DICE: 19 (152 hp)
% IN LAIR: 99% (see below)
TREASURE TYPE: H, S, T, U, W × 2 (see below)
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 5-12/5-12/6-36
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Breath weapons; spell use; disease; fear aura; creation of undead followers*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Surprised only on a 1 on 1d12; spell and psionic immunities (see below); immune to electricity; regeneration; takes half damage from edged weapons; cannot be turned by clerics*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 15%
INTELLIGENCE: *Supra-genius*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*
SIZE: L (48' long)
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil/Immune to all attacks*
CHANCE OF:
Speaking: 100%
Magic use: 100%
Sleeping: *Nil*
LEVEL/XP Value: X/30,560

Originally from the first plane of the Nine Hells, Dragotha was in life a huge, ancient, red dragon — a consort of the evil dragon queen Tiamat. Being the most powerful of Tiamat's companions, he enjoyed privileges that no other dragon could hope for. However, like all who are in league with Tiamat, he was expendable. When Dragotha murdered another dragon who threatened his position with Tiamat, the dragon queen became furious and ordered Dragotha's death. Ready to obey her will (as well as eliminate a rival), the other dragons killed Dragotha. Dragotha, however, had made plans before his death to insure that he lived forever. He had contacted an unknown deity of death who, for personal reasons, agreed to restore "life" to Dragotha's body when Dragotha died. The deity restored Dragotha, but instead of renewed life, Dragotha was placed in an eternal cursed state resembling lichdom. Dragotha was allowed to escape to the Prime Material Plane, where the deity was sure Dragotha's rage would cause massive death and destruction — which would please this evil deity, who is rumored to have been Nerull the Reaper (described in the *WORLD OF GREYHAWK™* fantasy setting booklets).

Dragotha now lives in his lair on Oerth, in the northern part of the Flanaess.

Though mention of his lair on the map in *White Plume Mountain* makes it appear that he is located near that volcano-fortress (hex T3-70 on the maps that come with the *WORLD OF GREYHAWK* fantasy setting boxed set), Dragotha's lair is actually in hex K4-58, on the edge of the Cold Marshes just north of the Howling Hills. He ventures out once every century or so to spend his fury on whomever he can find. The rest of his days are spent preparing for the day when he can challenge both Tiamat and the deity responsible for his curse. He does not venture out often, for he does not wish to draw unwanted attention. His influence across Oerth is thus small, though his ultimate plans are of mighty and merciless revenge. His lair is said to extend endlessly into the earth, and is filled with treasure and riches — but it is also said that Dragotha chooses only magical items that he can use himself, and he uses them freely if need be.

Dragotha appears to be a huge, skeletal dragon, with wings covered by a thin, clear membrane that allows flight when he flaps his wings. His eyes glow with a pale blue light, and his movements are intelligent and carefully considered most of the time. If enraged for some reason, Dragotha loses all self-control and lashes out savagely at all living beings nearby. It is said that his voice is always that of a soft, lispng whisper. Dragotha knows most of the languages of the Flanaess, and collects trivial bits of information from captives (apparently for his own curiosity) before slaying them.

While a red dragon, Dragotha was considered one of Tiamat's best fighters. He is still very capable. Dragotha attacks with his two powerful claws and his vicious bite. Any hit made by Dragotha not only does normal damage but also casts *cause disease* on living beings (a saving throw vs. spells negates this effect). Although his claws and bite are powerful, they are nothing compared to his powerful breath weapons. Because of his curse, Dragotha can use three different breath weapons, including a cone of frost similar to that of a white dragon, and a poisonous chlorine gas cloud similar to that of a green dragon. The cone of frost is 90' long with a base diameter of 30'; the gas cloud is 60' long, 40' wide, and 30' high. Each breath weapon does 152 hp damage if the victim fails his saving throw vs. breath weapon; the victim takes half damage if he makes his saving throw. Dragotha can use each of these two breath attacks two times daily.

However, sometimes Dragotha wishes to use his opponents to serve his needs. In this case, he uses his most powerful breath weapon: his dreaded *death wind*. This wind of negative energy causes all beings within range to save vs. breath weapon or die; slain humans, demihumans, humanoids, and giantkind are then transformed into undead warriors who serve their slayer. Those who save take no physical damage, but have a -4

penalty applied to all saving throws, attacks, and ability scores (to a minimum score of 1) for 2-12 turns. Such survivors are weak from having their life force almost drained, and a second saving throw vs. spells (with wisdom bonuses applicable) must be made or else the victims are filled with *fear*, causing them to flee in terror and be unable to return to face Dragotha for 4-24 hours. This breath weapon may be used twice per day, resembles a blast of rippling black energy, and has the same dimensions as the cone of frost weapon.

A person changed by Dragotha into an undead warrior (known in legend as a *drakanman*) retains all hit dice, hit points, and strength scores, but loses all other learned skills and bonuses as well as psionic and spell-casting abilities. Each drakanman (unless magical items or armor dictate otherwise) has a base AC 7, with a bonus of -1 per level of the victim over 1st level to a limit of AC 0. (To determine the level of multiclassed characters, average the levels and round up.) Beings with less than 1 HD or of zero level simply become 1 HD drakanmen. Drakanmen (like Dragotha himself) are immune to all enchantment/charm and illusion/phantasm spells, all forms of *fear* and paralysis, poison, insanity, death-related spells, sunlight, psionic attacks, and all cold-based spells and effects. They strongly resemble zombies but gain normal reaction in

melee. Holy water does 2-8 hp damage per vial to them. Drakanmen are semi-intelligent, but they follow only Dragotha's orders, which are given in a coded language that only Dragotha speaks. They can use armor, shields, weapons, and simple magical devices — often the very ones that they used in life when they came to attack Dragotha. A *resurrection* spell can reverse this condition, if cast within seven days of the drakanman's creation; after that, only a *wish* will work (affecting only one drakanman per *wish*).

A drakanman is usually useful for 10-40 years, after which time it collapses and disintegrates; the victim cannot then be returned to life by any means. All drakanmen have a movement rate of 15". If unarmed, they strike once per round with a fist, doing 1-4 hp damage, plus any strength bonuses possessed in life.

Dragotha can control as many hit dice of warriors as he has hit points (152). Because of his powerful nature, Dragotha is aware of how close to this limit his combined force of drakanmen is, and he knows the relative power of individual drakanmen. Dragotha's control over his drakanmen allows him to select one of his individual drakanmen and see whatever that drakanman sees, though this activity cannot be performed while doing anything else. Switching to another drakanman's viewpoint takes one round. Dragotha can

still receive brief mental warnings from any one of his drakanmen at any time, if such were placed on guard duty and ordered to notify Dragotha if intruders appear. In such an event, Dragotha would receive the warning but would have to look through the drakanman's eyes to see what the problem was, as no other information but the "paging call" could be sent. The range of this mental effect is one mile. One of Dragotha's favorite tricks is to place his drakanmen in positions whereby they not only frighten away potential looters but also serve as spies.

Excess drakanmen not controlled by Dragotha (but produced by him) are given one last command by Dragotha and sent away; the command is limited to a few words, typically "Go back from whence ye came and kill all that ye see." The demigod Iuz, who rules the land south of Dragotha's lair, was rumored to have sent a hundred goblins to test his neighbor. Dragotha sent them back as 1-HD drakanmen that caused Iuz much regret.

In addition to his terrible breath weapons, Dragotha can also cast spells at the power of a 14th-level magic-user. He can cast seven first-level spells, six second, five third, four fourth, three fifth, two sixth, and one seventh. He can choose from any magic-user spells but must memorize them as any other magic-user. It is believed he already knows the spell *write* and has the permanent power to *read magic* and see *invisible objects*.

If wounded, Dragotha *regenerates* damage at the rate of 1 hp per turn. The mere sight of this monster causes all creatures within 120 yards and under 5 hit dice or levels to flee in panic. More powerful beings are allowed a saving throw vs. spells, though those with 8 hit dice or levels are immune to this effect. Living dragons who meet Dragotha immediately flee without bothering to attack, as they have heard of him and are terrified to be in the same area with him.

Dragotha has few weaknesses. Attackers may hit him with nonmagical weapons, and *holy swords* do double damage to him (edged weapons, however, do only half damage to his skeletal form). Like all undead, he is affected by holy water, which does 4-10 (2d4 + 2) hp damage to him. Dragotha, although formerly a red dragon, is now vulnerable to fire due to his undead status, taking +1 per hit dice of damage.

Because Dragotha has many guards (20-80 levels worth at any one time) and because of his innate ability to see invisible creatures (even through the eyes of a drakanman), he is rarely surprised. All of his mazelike caverns are closely watched and trapped due to his desire for privacy. If caught in a no-escape situation, Dragotha attempts to bargain his way out. This does not mean that he will serve an earthly master, however, for he has vowed to never again be placed in the role of a servant.



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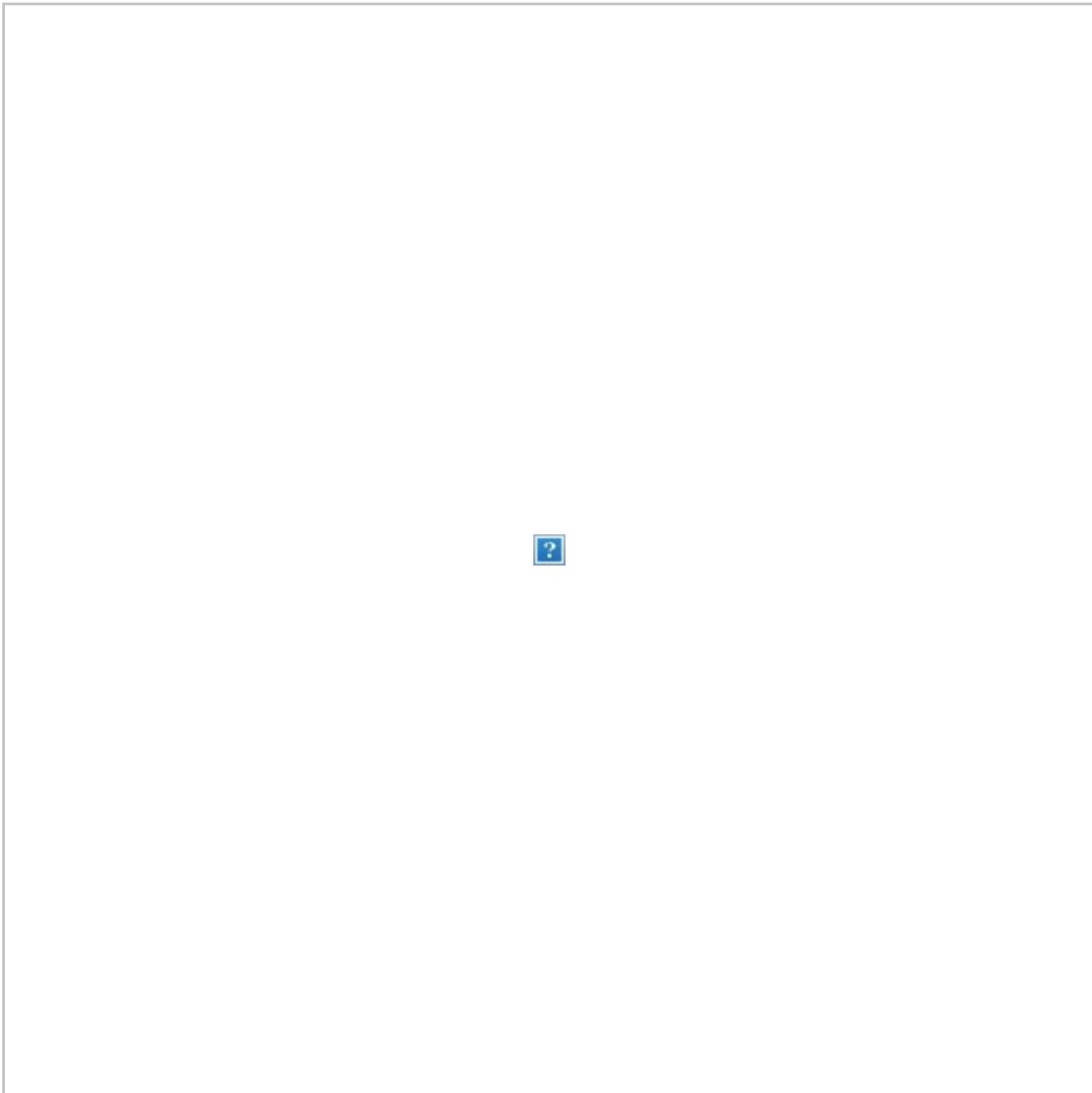
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